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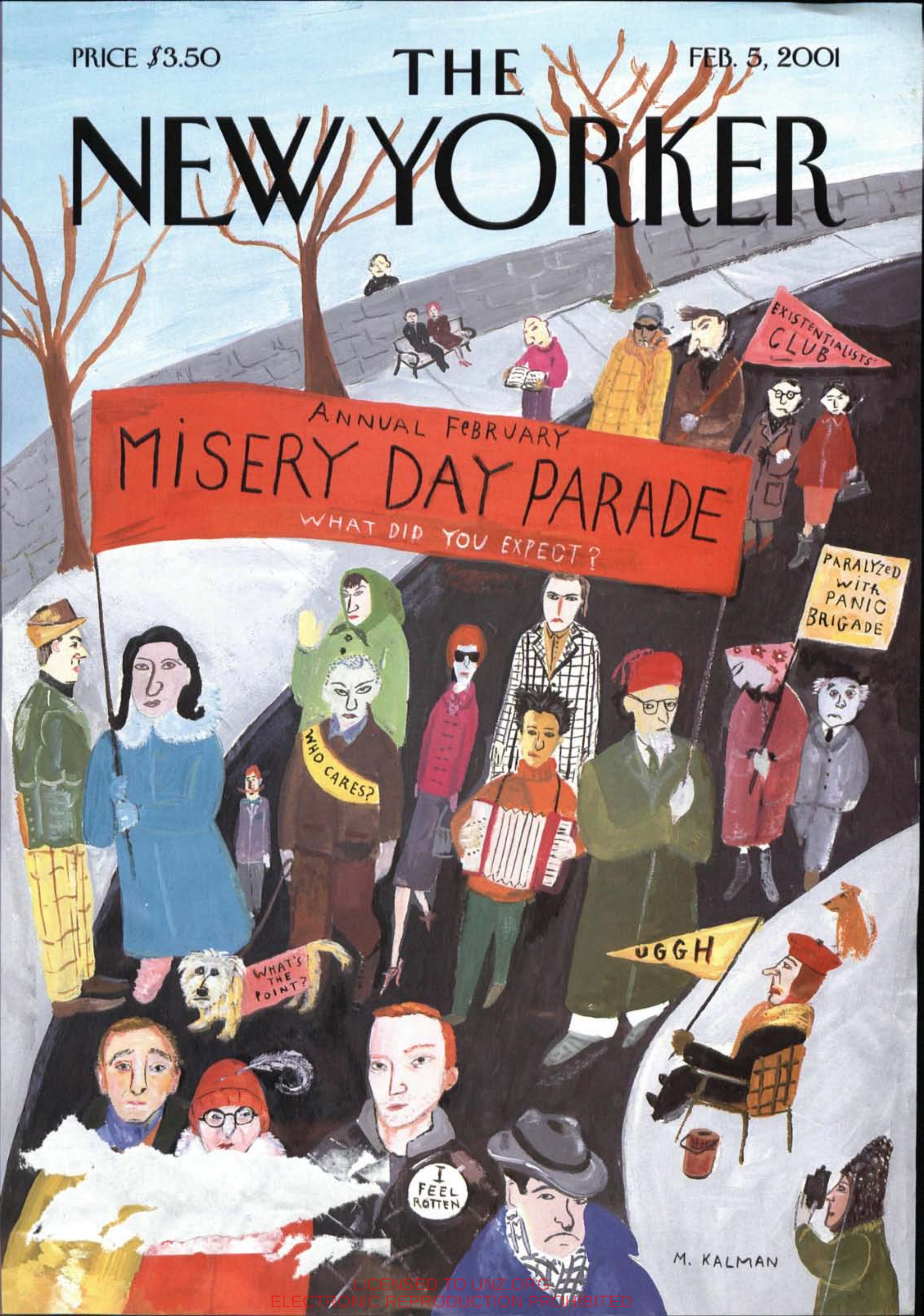
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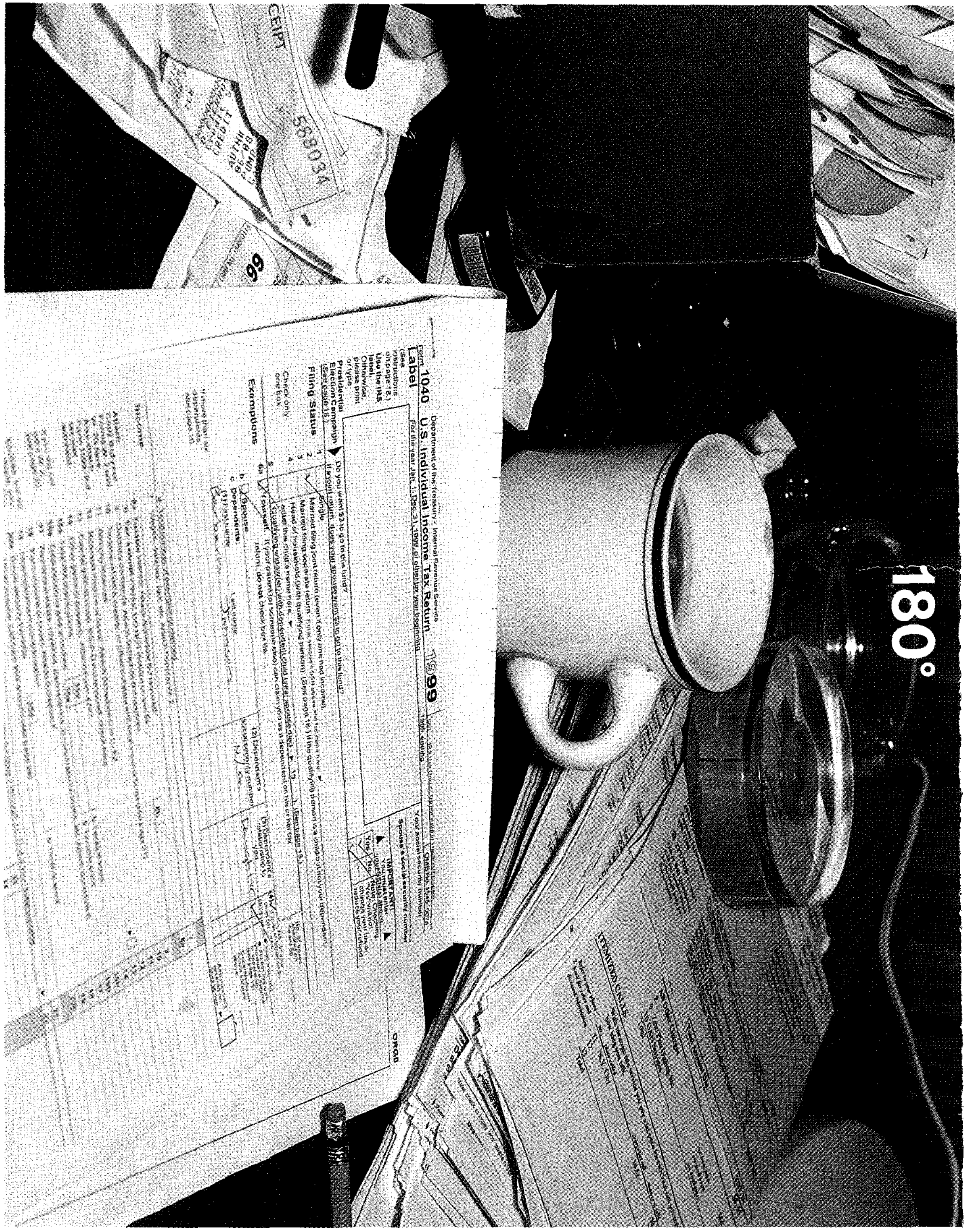

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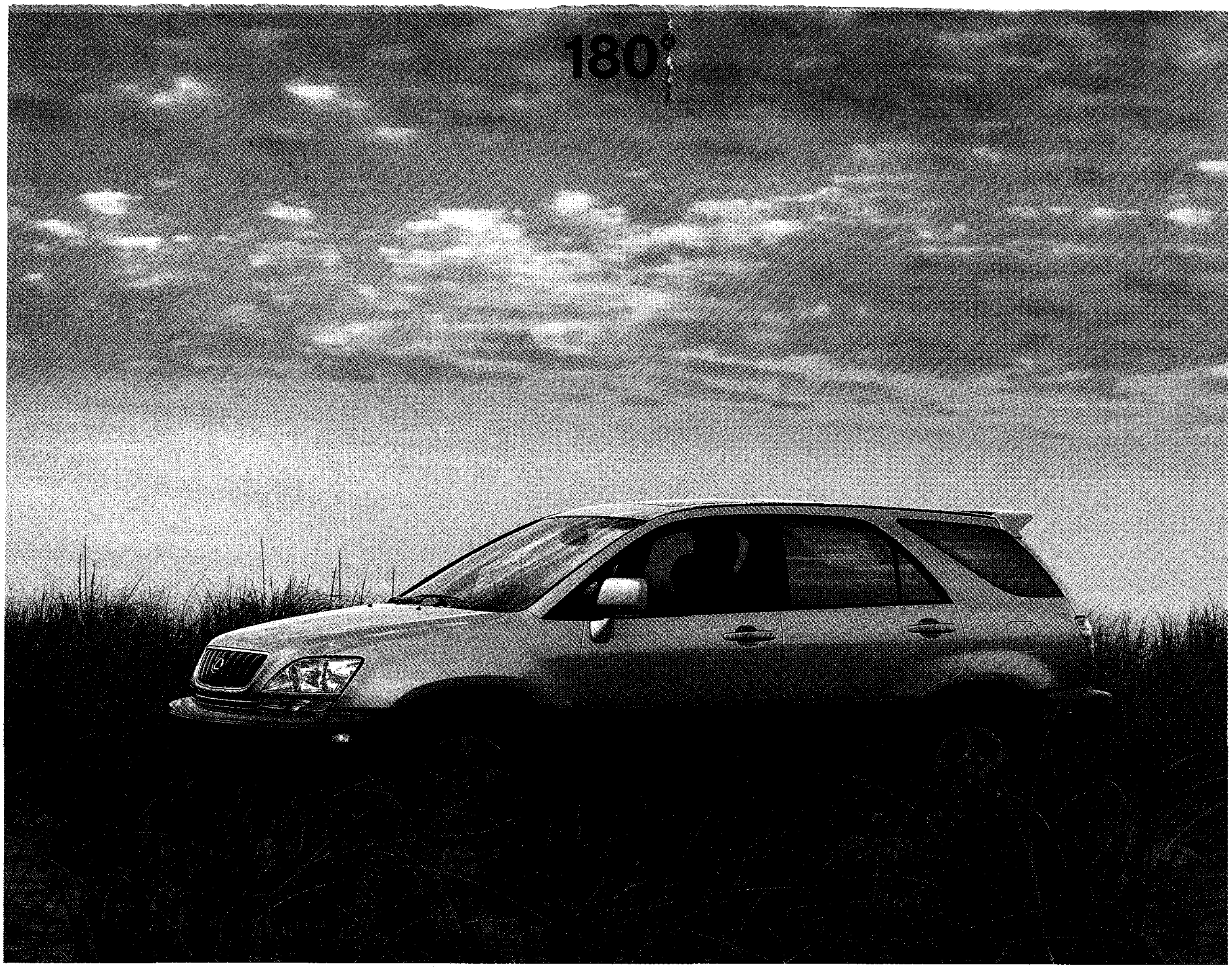

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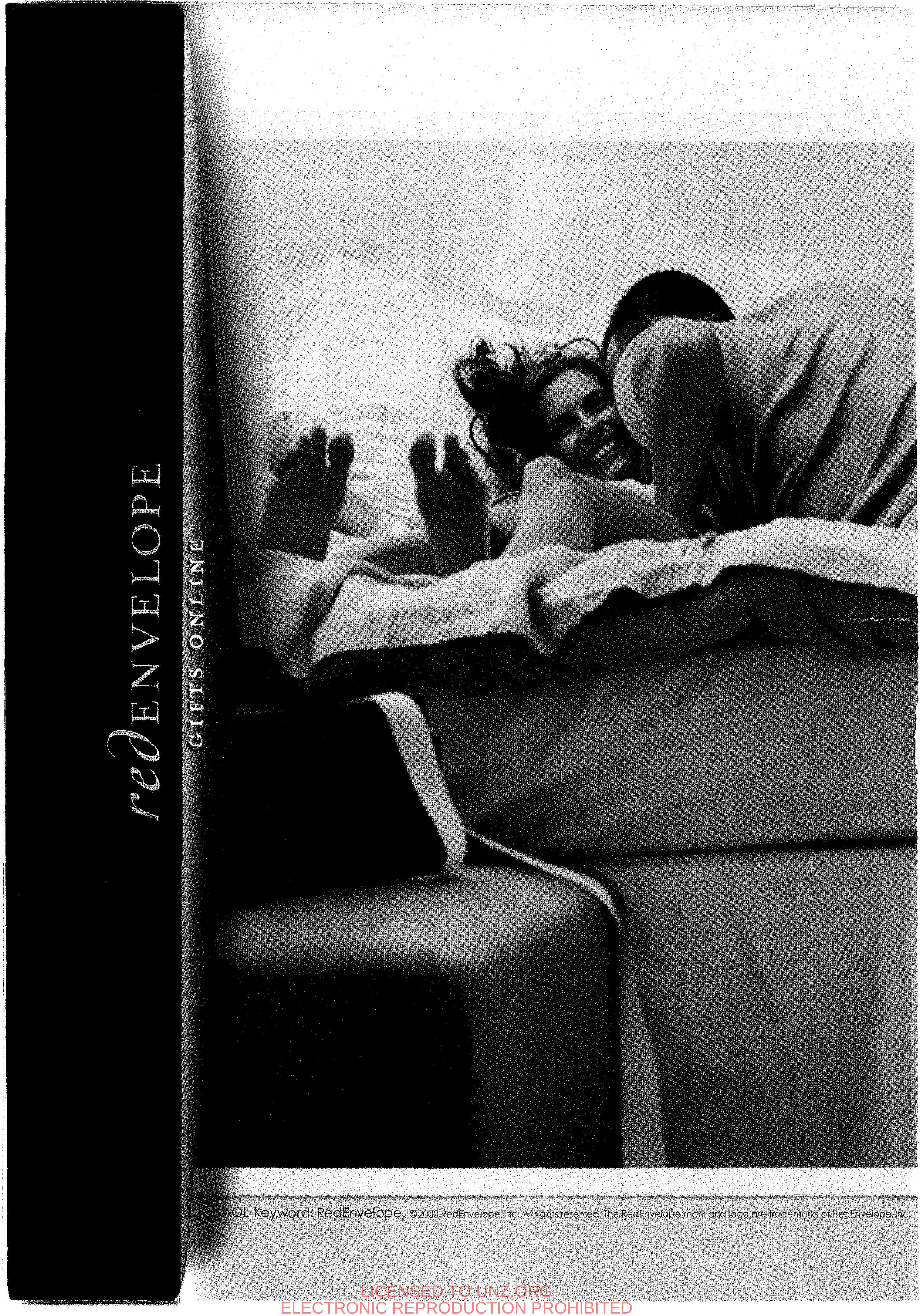
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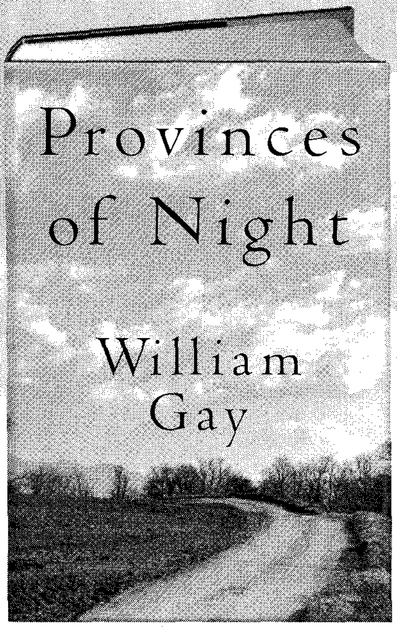

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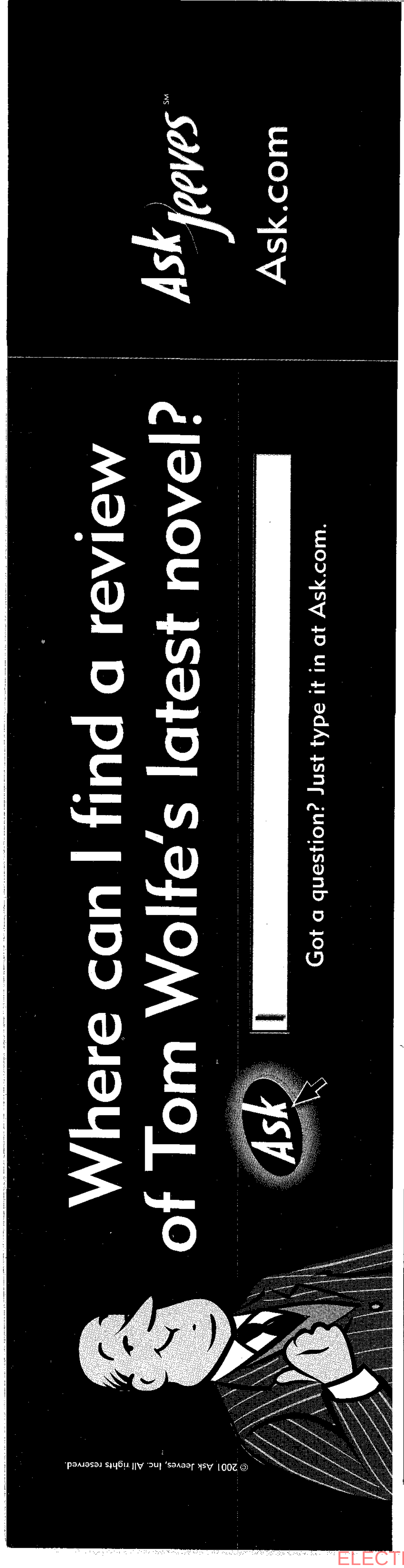
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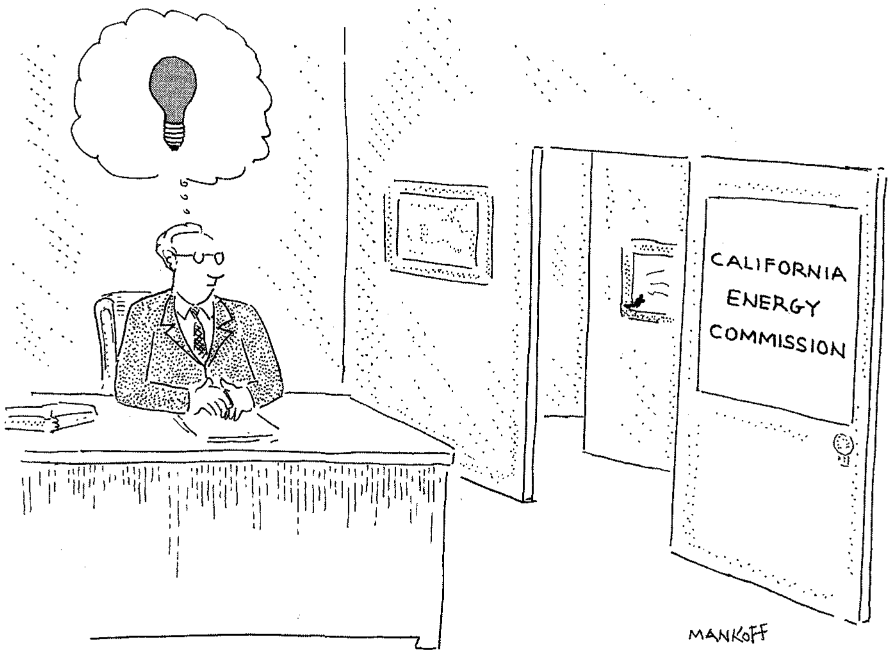

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THE MAIL

THE HANGING JUDGE

Why did Judge Richard Posner—who, as Ken Auletta reveals, came tantalizingly close to settling the Microsoft case after the trial judge, Thomas Penfield Jackson, asked him to mediate—fail to close the deal ("Final Offer," January 15th)? Auletta suggests that Posner made a fatal misstep in not forcing the Department of Justice and its co-plaintiffs, the state attorneys general, to agree on terms among themselves before wresting concessions from Microsoft. An experienced jurist like Posner should be accustomed to handling such collisions between allies. Ordinarily, a mediator can count on the trial judge to exert pressure on all sides to settle. This, surely, was Posner's hope in dragging the parties before Jackson at a crucial juncture in the talks. But Jackson, as he all but admits to Auletta, saw Microsoft as an arrogant miscreant headed by a Napoleonic nerd, and had only one real response: to threaten the company anew, thereby stiffening the resolve of the attorneys general to insist on excessive concessions. This story is really about how a judge's personal feelings can come to govern a matter whose significance extends well beyond his courtroom. Jackson's overheated Roy Bean act may cost the public dearly.

Mark J. McPherson
Rutherford, N.J.

EXITING THE GARDEN

What a pity that Jamaica Kincaid so completely misses the point of having a garden ("Sowers and Reapers," January 22nd). Even the prisoners at Auschwitz, whose story was told by her fellow-panelist at the Garden Conservancy luncheon, understood: it is a place where one gains strength—both physical and spiritual. Her preference for the abstract, untouchable Garden of Eden over the publicly accessible garden at Hidcote Manor fits well with her decision to disrupt the event with a painful, politicized diatribe against her Southern audience. While Kincaid imported a hundred tons of stone to build walls through her garden, the conservancy's Frank Cabot, whose views she disparages, was working to rally gardeners across the country to share their gardens—some of them creative, some merely grand—with any plant enthusiast who cares to visit. Horticulture, here, is a great leveller, as inspiring as Kincaid's disdain for the conservancy was disappointing.

Jeanne T. Will
Chester, N.J.

FORGOTTEN FIRST RUNS

James Surowiecki's claim that movie theatres sell tickets to flops for the same price as tickets to hits "because they've always charged the same price for movies" is not the whole story (The Talk of the Town, January 15th). Well into the nineteen-seventies, movies opened only in a limited number of first-run theatres around the country (rarely more than a few hundred at a time), and then filtered down to lesser theatres, sometimes months later. First-run theatres charged the highest prices, second-runs were cheaper, and there were further drops on the way to the bookings of last resort. Saturation distribution, by which a new movie opens simultaneously in thousands of theatres, changed all that. Most of today's multiplexes are first-runs, while subsequent-run venues have survived in the form of pay TV and video rentals.

Warren G. Harris
New York City

CORRECTION: On page 57 of "Arafat's Gift," by Jeffrey Goldberg, in the January 29th issue, Shimon Peres's party affiliation was incorrectly stated. He is a member of the Labor Party.

•

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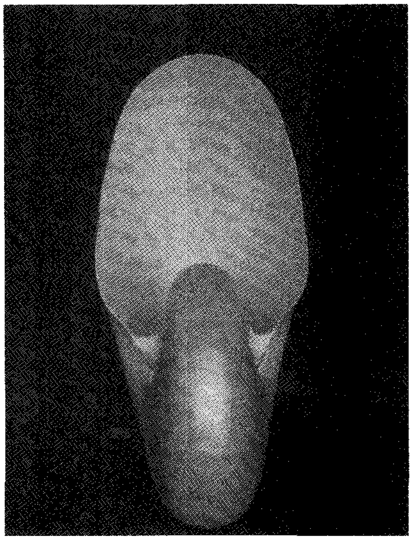

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BOY GETS GIRL
The latest drama by Chicago playwright Rebecca Gilman ("Spinning Into Butter") deals with a journalist whose life is turned upside down after she rejects a blind date. Michael Maggio is the director. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

CELLINI
Reg Rogers portrays the sixteenth-century Florentine sculptor, in a new play by John Patrick Shanley, who is also directing. In previews. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

THE DEVIL'S MUSIC: THE LIFE AND BLUES OF BESSIE SMITH
Miche Braden stars as the singer in a Melting Pot Theatre Company production of Angelo Parra's play with music. Preview Jan. 31. Opens Feb. 1 at 7. (Theatre 3, at 311 W. 43rd St. 279-4200.)

FORCE CONTINUUM
A drama about a rookie New York City cop which traces the careers of three generations of black policemen. Written by Kia Corthron. In previews. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

ISN'T IT ROMANTIC?
The Worth Street Theatre Company's staging of Wendy Wasserstein's 1983 comedy, directed by Jeff Cohen. Previews begin Feb. 2. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St., at West Broadway. 206-1515.)

THE PLAY ABOUT THE BABY
Marian Seldes and Brian Murray portray a mysterious older couple who convince a pair of new parents that their baby was never born, in a new play by Edward Albee. David Esbjornson is the director. In previews. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

A SKULL IN CONNEMARA
The second installment in the Irish playwright Martin McDonagh's Leenane trilogy (which includes "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" and "The Lonesome West"), presented by the Roundabout Theatre Company. Gordon Edelstein is the director. In previews. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AMERICAN RHAPSODY
KT Sullivan and Mark Nadler star in a musical revue celebrating the works of George Gershwin. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 239-6200.)

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BETRAYAL
A revival of Harold Pinter's bleak 1978 comedy of manners, about the blithe treachery of adultery and the thousand little lies that can make and break a friendship. Juliette Binoche, inexplicably, stars as a publisher's wife who has had a long affair with her husband's best friend, a literary agent. Binoche can do happy, she can do sad, but she brings no definition, no specificity, to her role. Liev Schreiber, as her lover, and John Slattery, as her husband, do better with their parts—particularly Slattery, who combines emotional nakedness with reserve to portray the terribly comic aspects of trauma. Draggily directed by David Leveaux. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/27/00.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-9393. Closes Feb. 4.)

CARY AND GALLO: WHAT IF WE DID THIS?
Josh Cary and Patrick Gallo present live sketch comedy and five short comic films, in which they star. (Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 12.)

THE CHERRY ORCHARD
The Pearl Theatre Company's staging of Chekhov's last play. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

COBB
In his brilliantly constructed drama about baseball's greatest hitter and most brutal bully, the playwright Lee Blessing places three actors onstage together to portray Tyrus Raymond Cobb; they reminisce from the afterlife and interact with each other at various stages in Cobb's professional and personal career, during which he sheepishly dodged social injustices and thereby denied himself a chance at true greatness. (Lucille Lortel Theatre, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

THE CONJURE MAN DIES
Rudolph Fisher's 1932 novel is the basis for this mystery play, in which the body of a Harvard-educated African king and Harlem "psychist" goes missing. Directed by Clinton Turner Davis. (Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. 279-4200. Closes Feb. 11.)

DIDO, QUEEN OF CARTHAGE
The Target Margin Theatre's production of Christopher Marlowe's rarely staged circa-1593 play, directed by David Herskovits. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 358-3657. Closes Feb. 24.)

THE DINNER PARTY
Neil Simon's new comedy is set in an opulent restaurant in Paris, and his six characters—three divorced couples—are not the usual Simon-Americans of his "Suite" plays. They are French, or are meant to be. Still, the play is essentially traditional fare; the running, or limping, gags are in ready supply, and the secondhand shtick, often in the form of aeons-old alimony jokes, flows freely along this Boulevard of Broken Marriages. (11/6/00) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

END OF THE WORLD PARTY
A comedy by Chuck Ranberg, about a group of men who rent a Fire Island house together each year. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 2001: A SPOOF ODYSSEY
These days, ridiculing Broadway is like shooting fish in a barrel, so it's amazing that the latest version of Gerard Alessandrini's long-running satirical revue manages to fire off as many good ones as it does. Alessandrini can always be counted on for a smart laugh, but not all of the numbers here are up to his usual high standards of comic cruelty; it's partly because the ensemble as a whole is not as adept at impersonations as casts of the past, and partly because none of the new crop of Broadway stars are large enough to lend themselves to caricature. Thank goodness the wonderful Christine Pedi is still in the show; her loopy, loving imitations of yesteryear's biggies—Elaine Stritch, Liza Minnelli, Ethel Merman, and Barbra Streisand—are more than worth the trip and the price of a ticket. (Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.)

FOUR GUYS NAMED JOSÉ . . . AND UNA MUJER NAMED MARIA
This crowd-pleasing, crayon-colored revue of Latin song and dance is knowingly broad and hammy. But the talented cast sends up the singers and songs that helped create Latin stereotypes and delivers the remaining material—dance songs, songs of nostalgia for one's homeland, songs of love, songs about women named Maria—with exuberant wit and affection. (Blue Angel, 323 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE FULL MONTY
The musical version of the 1997 movie, about a group of unemployed factory workers who try to earn some cash by stripping, has all the spirit and charm of the original but, as befits a Broadway production, on a much larger, pizzazzier scale. Early on, Terrence McNally's book and David Yazbek's songs strike notes of class consciousness and unemployment-related low male self-esteem a little too hard, but soon enough the show's winning good humor and inventiveness kick in, and if you don't find yourself laughing consistently (and tearing up occasionally), well, then, maybe you don't *deserve* to see six men prancing around in red G-strings. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

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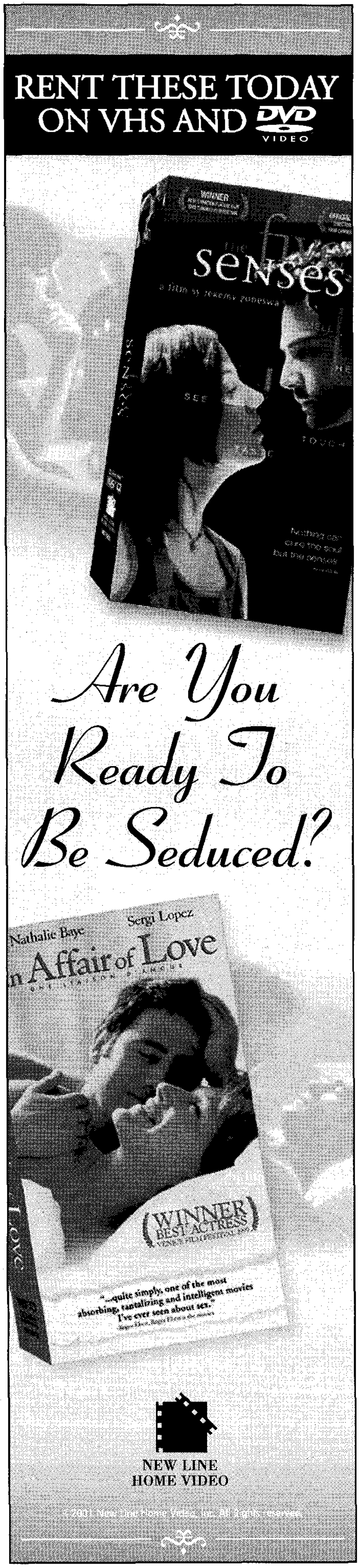
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AN IDIOT DIVINE
A music-theatre piece written and performed by Rinde Eckert ("And God Created Great Whales"). Directed by Ellen McLaughlin. (45 Bleecker Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING OSCAR
The Irish actor Nial Buggy stars as Oscar Wilde, in Micheál MacLiammóir's one-man portrait of the playwright. Directed by Charlotte Moore. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

JANE EYRE
It's a dicey—and perhaps an unnecessary—business to musicalize a novel that provides its own rich, lingering strains. There is heart here; for soul you'll have to read the novel. The show is respectful of and faithful to Brontë's original, but it needs to be brilliant and piercing, and it isn't. Though the show's book is a fair job, the music is schmaltzy, and the modern stage devices—the endless projections of trees and sky may make you feel like you're watching the Weather Channel—don't quite bring Brontë to life. The appealing cast is led by Marla Schaffel, who is the very picture of the Jane Eyre in your mind's eye, and James Barbour, who is a bit less imposing a Mr. Rochester than is wanted but has a satisfying baritone. And three cheers for Mary Stout, as the flappable old housekeeper, Mrs. Fairfax. With a book by John Caird and a score by Paul Gordon. Directed by Mr. Caird and Scott Schwartz. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

KILLERS AND OTHER FAMILY
Rattlestick Productions presents a play by Lucy Thurber, about a woman whose past catches up with her. (Rattlestick Theatre, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 206-1515. Closes Feb. 18.)

KRISIT
Hollywood is the setting for Y York's comedy about plastic surgery, which stars Scotty Bloch and Larry Pine. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes Feb. 18.)

LIVING IN THE WIND
Sally Stewart-Coleman and David Damane portray married ex-slaves trying to rebuild their lives after the Civil War, in a romantic drama by Michael Bradford. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

MAYBE BABY, IT'S YOU
Love in the big city, explained with many laughs by the show's accomplished writer-performers, Charlie Shanian and Shari Simpson. An undercurrent of sweetness and longing makes the evening more than a series of skits. (Theatre at St. Luke's, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

MOMMA
In her one-woman show, Siobhan Fallon portrays a bus driver from rural New York who travels to Manhattan to visit a fertility herbalist. Feb. 4 at 8. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

THE MOON OF THE CARIBBEES
From the Bat Theatre Company, a staging of O'Neill's 1917 play, set on the steamer Glencairn, anchored off the West Indies. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-0051. Closes Feb. 24.)

MORE LIES ABOUT JERZY
Jared Harris stars in a drama about the life of Jerzy Kosinski, written by Davey Holmes and directed by Darko Tresnjak. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303. Closes Feb. 11.)

NOW THAT COMMUNISM IS DEAD, MY LIFE FEELS EMPTY
Richard Foreman's forty-eighth play, in which two ex-radicals (Tony Torn and Jay Smith) look for meaning in the new millennium. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

PARADISE ISLAND
From the New Group, a play by Benjie Aerenson, in which a mother and daughter (Lynn Cohen and Adrienne Shelly) spend twenty-four hours together, gambling in the Bahamas. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200. Closes Feb. 25.)

PETE 'N' KEELY
A pair of singing stars, formerly a married duo, are reunited on a television variety show in 1968, in a musical comedy by James Hindman. With sets by Ray Klausen and costumes by Bob Mackie. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

PROOF
The young playwright David Auburn's play stars Mary-Louise Parker as the daughter of a brilliant University of Chicago mathematician, whose life and career began to fall away when he became mentally ill. Parker's character appears to have similar gifts and, possibly, similar troubles, and Parker skillfully and believably delivers the smart and sullen, insolent and indolent goods. Auburn has taken on some biggies here: what the link may be between genius and mental instability, why it is that lives get stuck, and how elusive the truth of the matter—any matter—can be. For all that, you wish the play were a little richer, a little less simply resolved; but its level of accomplishment and the realness of its characters show that Auburn has real depth and a real voice. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

RESIDENT ALIEN
Bette Bourne portrays Quentin Crisp in Tim Fountain's play about the life and work of the late East Village writer. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
Rather than a revival of Richard O'Brien's 1973 musical, a glam tribute to fifties horror flicks, Christopher Ashley's production is an unsexy and oddly earnest homage to the 1975 cult-movie adaptation. The only air of self-parody comes from the impish Dick Cavett; as the narrator, he gives the show a shot of vitality with his improvised standup shtick and, if you're lucky, his version of the Moonwalk. The rest of the casting is inspired (although Lea DeLaria and Joan Jett are sadly underused), but the performers can't really compete with their celluloid counterparts. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

SANDRA BERNHARD
The comedienne, cultural commentator, and singer presents her latest one-woman show, "The Love Machine," backed by a five-piece combo. (Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 4.)

THE SEARCH FOR SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE
Lily Tomlin is back on Broadway in the one-woman, thirteen-character show written for her by her longtime collaborator, Jane Wagner, and what's not to love about that? Tomlin is terrific—moving, funny, and as lithe and vibrant as she was when she first performed the show here, fifteen years ago. This is a chance to see a remarkable life force in action. (11/27/00) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

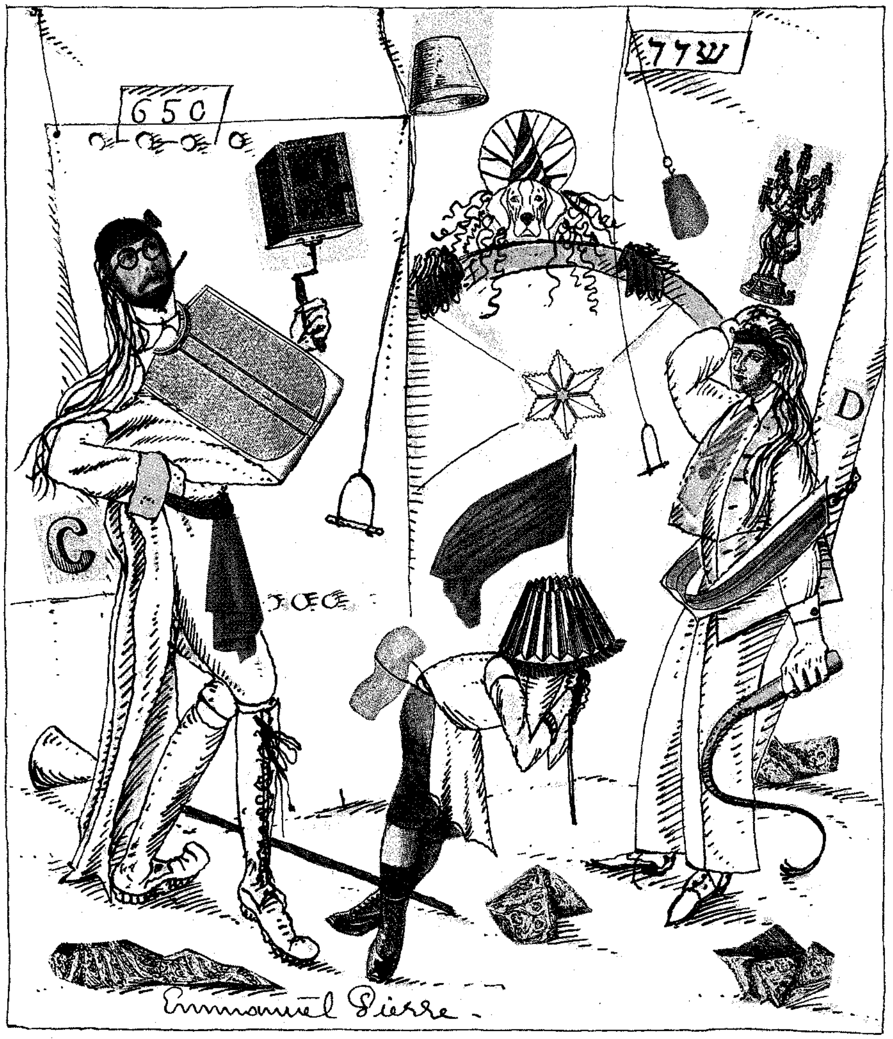
SEUSSICAL
For all the whimsy of Theodor Geisel's doggerel, what's missing in this relentlessly cute musical by the team of Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty is mayhem and magic. The music and lyrics are generic, the costumes are unimaginative, the choreography and direction are winded. With the exception of one gentle and winning performance—by Kevin Chamberlin as Horton the Elephant, who gets conned into hatching an egg—it's a show with curiously little charm. (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

SHAKESPEARE'S VILLAINS: A MASTERCLASS IN EVIL
In his one-man show, Steven Berkoff discusses and performs various villain roles from the Shakespearean canon, including Iago, Shylock, and even Hamlet. Berkoff's long-winded digressions—and there are many—are more distracting than entertaining, and his need to inject humor everywhere is frustrating. Nevertheless, Berkoff's transformations are extraordinarily nimble, particularly his Richard III and his Macbeth, and his insightful analysis of performance technique and text celebrate both the wonders of Shakespeare and the wonders of theatregoing itself. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 11.)

THE SYRINGA TREE
A tour-de-force solo drama, written by and starring South African native and first-time playwright Pamela Gien, who gives an extraordinary perfor-

mance in all twenty-three roles. It's a love story, really, about the strong, lasting bond between a white girl and her black nanny in South Africa, which begins in 1965 and continues through the following twenty years of turbulent and violent upheavals over apartheid. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.)

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Charles Busch's satire of New York intellectual angst, staged by Manhattan Theatre Club, has moved to Broadway. Linda Lavin, Tony Roberts, and Michele Lee star. Lynne Meadow is the director. (3/20/00) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)



Richard Foreman's latest play, "Now That Communism Is Dead, My Life Feels Empty," starring Jay Smith and Tony Torn, at St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie.

EMMANUEL PIERRE

TAMICANFLY
A blind gambler risks his life savings on a long-shot horse, in a drama by Scott Marshall Taylor. Ethan McSweeny is the director. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 4.)

THEATRE OF LIGHT
Lights, paintings, movement, and music from Rudi Stern, the "light artist" whose designs in the nineteen-sixties accompanied Timothy Leary's Psychedelic Celebrations and concerts by the Doors. (Flamboyan Theatre, Soto Velez Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk St., between Delancey and Rivington Sts. 279-4200.)

TIME AND AGAIN
Jack Finney's 1970 novel about a New Yorker who travels through time is the basis for a new musical by Walter Edgar Kennon (score) and Jack Viertel (book). Susan H. Schulman is the director. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Jan. 31 at 8: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Slonimsky's Earbox," "In the Night," and "Mercurial Manoeuvres." ♦ Feb. 1 at 8: "Episodes," "In the Night," and "The Beethoven Seventh." ♦ Feb. 2 at 8: "Mercurial Manoeuvres," "Afternoon of a Faun," "Zakouski," and "Prodigal Son." ♦ Feb. 3 at 2: "Fearful Symmetries," "Davidsbündlertänze," and "The Beethoven Seventh." ♦ Feb. 3 at 8: "Episodes," "Afternoon of a Faun," "Allegro Brillante," and "Fearful Symmetries." ♦ Feb. 4 at 3: "Slonimsky's Earbox," "Duo Concertant," "La Valse," and "The Beethoven Seventh." ♦ Feb. 6 at 8: "Donizetti Variations," "In the Night," and "Mercurial Manoeuvres." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 870-5570. Through Feb. 25.)

MOMIX
For its twentieth-anniversary season, the company offers three full-length programs: "Opus Cactus," inspired by the saguaros in the landscape of the Southwest; "MOMIX in Orbit," a medley of repertory works such as "Millennium Skiva," a duet on skis, and "Sputnik," for seven apparently airborne dancers; and "Passion," a piece with erotic undertones drawn from such sources as Chinese tomb treasures and Renaissance paintings. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Jan. 30-Feb. 2 and Feb. 6 at 8, Feb. 3 at 2 and 8, and Feb. 4 at 2 and 7:30. Through Feb. 18.)

BUGLISI-FOREMAN DANCE
The former Martha Graham dancers Jacqulyn Buglisi and Donlin Foreman present an unironic interpretation of the modern tradition, complete with authentic Grahamesque touches: emotional theatrics, literally gut-wrenching movement, unapologetically big themes. Like ballet, it's a style that some swear by and others will never get used to, but given the recent uncertainty in the Graham bureaucracy, the two choreographers provide as pure a shot of it as you're likely to find just now. (The New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Jan. 31 at 7:30, Feb. 1-3 at 8, and Feb. 4 at 3.)

"WHEN THE WORLD SMELLS LIKE BACON"
Lawrence Goldhuber doesn't actually like solo shows much—in his experience, a whole night with the same guy can get tedious. But when his longtime dance partner Heidi Latsky left him (to have a baby), a solo show suddenly seemed like a fine alternative to a mid-career crisis. This retrospective of sixteen years of dancing and acting includes his King Kong solo from Bill T. Jones's 1992 "Love Defined"; the title monologue, about "being Jewish and fat," with a mesmerizing decapitation-at-the-disco number; and a medley of his TV spots (in such roles as the Fat Banker, Big Guy Garbage Man, Tubby Deliveryman, etc.). As a diversion from singularity, the charming Keely Garfield, of Sinister Slapstick, joins Goldhuber in an alternately seductive, frenetic, and forlorn duet. They do swift foxtrots, and he maneuvers her up and down like a barbell. So, what unites the show? "Me, of course," Goldhuber says. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Feb. 1-4 at 8:30.)

"TALKING DANCE"
Lucy Sexton, of Dancenoise, hosts an evening of works that combine dance and garrulity. The two-week series opens with a program featuring pioneers of the form: Ann Carlson, Blondell Cummings, Douglas Dunn, David Gordon, Bill T. Jones (Feb. 2 only), and Yvonne Rainer. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Jan. 31-Feb. 3 at 8. Through Feb. 10.)

"JILL IN BRAZIL/THE ORCHID SHOW"
The choreographer Neta Pulvermacher reprises her evening-length work about a soap-opera star vacationing in a swamp whose whimsical inhabitants, both human and orchid, tell lively stories sprinkled with obscure facts. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. Feb. 3-4 at 3.)

"IT WOULD STILL BE TRUE"
Freefall (Ltd.) offers a two-part work (the title piece and "White Lies") choreographed by Lynn Marie Ruse and Lynn Brown. (Orensanz Foundation, 172 Suffolk St. 955-0149. Feb. 1-2 at 8.)

YOSHIE TACHIBANA
This sixty-year-old Japanese dancer offers delicate performances of emotional extremity. Tachibana is the daughter of two Kabuki grand masters; in a tradition that encourages long careers, she is nearing the peak of her expressive powers. In one work, she's a heartsick old woman making a solitary journey one delicate, pigeon-toed step at a time; in another, she's a Japanese Juliet, willing to burn down her home for the chance to see her lover again. Through highly stylized gestures, she gradually moves from happiness to maddened grief. In her New York début, she presents two separate programs, accompanied by *nagauta* singers and musicians, on percussion and the three-stringed shamisen. (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St., at Second Ave. 752-3015. Feb. 2-3 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

"JAZZ AT THE PENTHOUSE"
The Modern Jazz Quartet is now history, but the disappearance of that brilliant ensemble allows us to focus on the offerings of its two surviving members: the pianist John Lewis and the bassist **Percy Heath.** Lewis had his Lincoln Center moment last month; now it's time for Heath to strut his stuff. In a duet setting with the pianist **Jeb Patton,** Heath will exhibit his cavernous sound, steady-as-she-goes swing, and melodic concision. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 721-6500. Feb. 1-3 at 8.)

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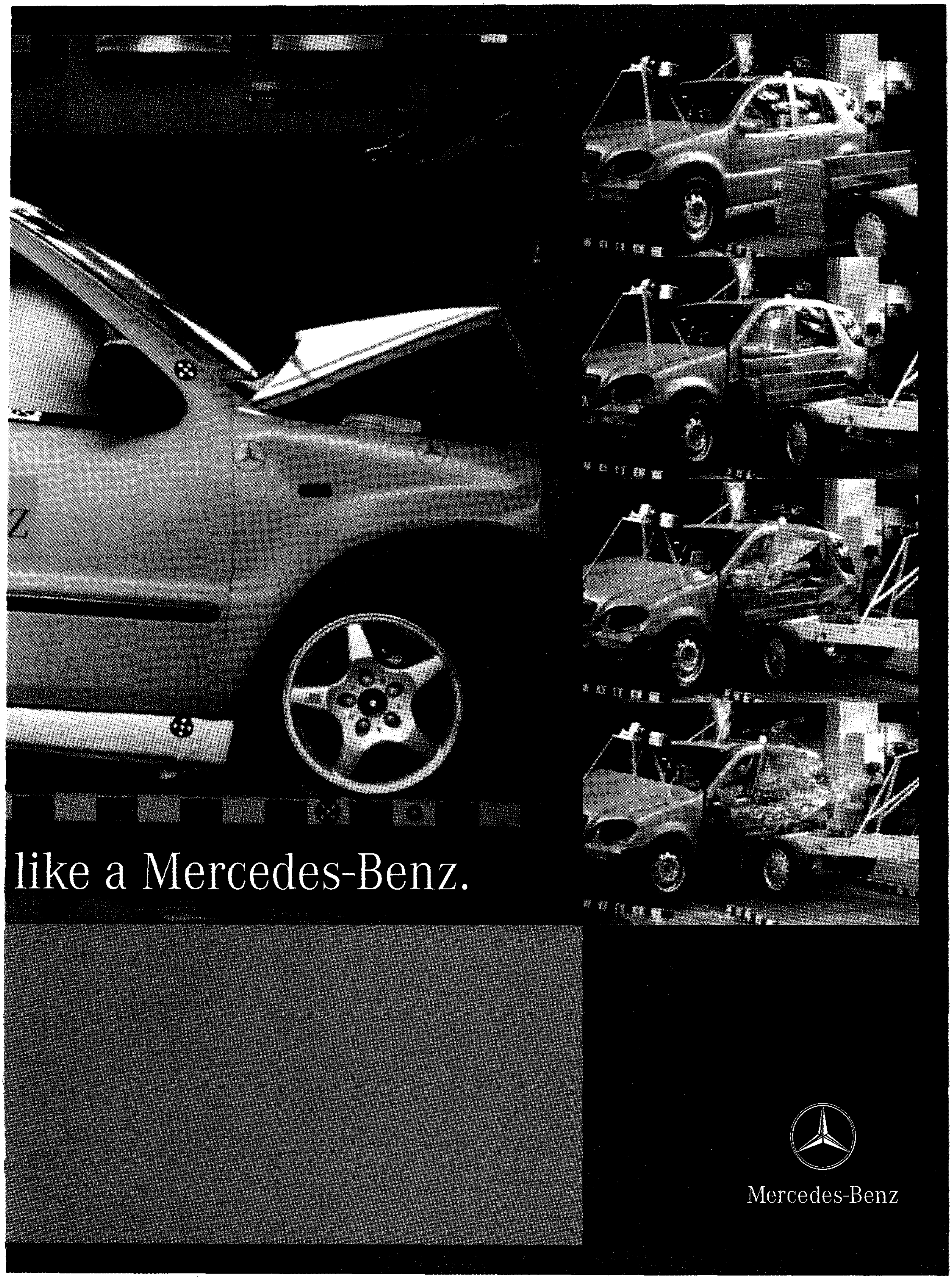

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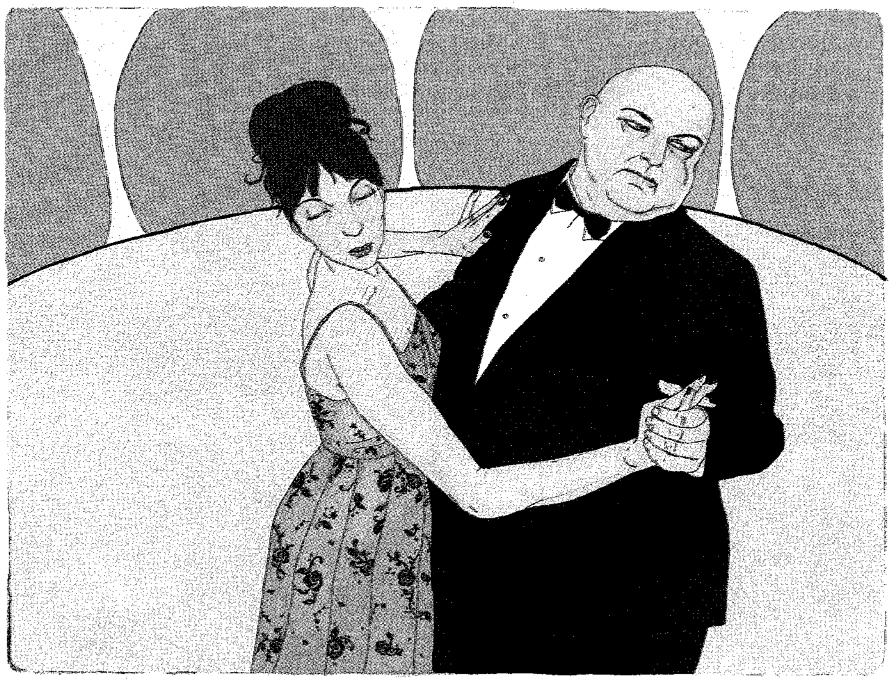

Keely Garfield and Lawrence Goldhuber, in "When the World Smells Like Bacon," Goldhuber's career retrospective at P.S. 122 (see Dance).

LARA TOMLIN

BACKSTREET BOYS
This Orlando quintet may be feeling a little like the title of their latest album, "Black and Blue." Although they managed to move 1.6 million copies of the disk last November during its first week on sale, that wasn't even close to the success of their labelmates and teenybop rivals 'N Sync (their sophomore album, "No Strings Attached," sold a whopping 2.4 million copies in its first week). Worse still, the Boys were bounced from the top of the charts by an oldies group, the Beatles. Everything is relative, of course—the eight-times-platinum status of "Black and Blue" must help to ease the pain. (Continental Airlines Arena, the Meadowlands. 212-307-7171. Feb. 3 at 7:30. ♦ Nassau Coliseum. 516-794-9300. Feb. 4-5 at 7:30.)

BLIND BOYS OF ALABAMA
The tireless septuagenarian Clarence Fountain leads this pack of faithful singers, which was formed some sixty years ago at the Talladega Institute for the Deaf and Blind. If you've ever wondered what inspired James Brown, Sam Cooke, Ray Charles, and other secular stars, the gospel singer Fountain will show you the source. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Feb. 3 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
243 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Feb. 2-4: **Morris Day & the Time.** After his turn in Prince's "Purple Rain" put him on the national map in 1984, the vain one left his band and headed for Hollywood. He appeared alongside the comic Andrew Dice Clay in the movie "The Adventures of Ford Fairlane" before deciding that second-tier stardom wasn't for him. A few years ago, he reunited the Time, which has been touring ever since. On New Year's Eve, for example, the band held court on the Strip in Las Vegas, competing with a fireworks show and sharing the stage with Kool & the Gang and a Beatles tribute band. But just because Day is no longer fashionable, it doesn't mean the funk is any less ferocious. Just try to stand still when the band breaks into "Jungle Love."

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Feb. 3: **David Johansen and the Harry Smiths.** Beautiful American music. Johansen's accomplished acoustic band takes its name from the man who put together the hugely influential "Anthology of American Folk Music," the ur-text for Bob Dylan and hundreds of other singer-songwriters. Johansen, setting aside his rowdy party alter ego Buster Poindexter, uses the songs and the spirit of those records as a jumping-off point for an evening of folk, country, and blues tunes that are heartfelt, funny, and often very odd indeed.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Feb. 1: **Rainer Maria.** One imagines Rilke would have mustered a wry smile upon hearing the sad and resistant songs of this Madison, Wisconsin, trio. The lead singer Caithlin De Marrais's poignant wordplay more than makes up for the wispiness of her vocals. On the first track of the band's latest release, "A Better Version of Me," she sings, "No one defies artificial light. . . . Why is technology an anathema to me?" Feb. 3: The dark and edgy bandoneon-infused songs of Denver's **16 Horsepower.**

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Jan. 31: The Olympia, Washington-based singer-songwriter **Sarah Dougher.** Feb. 2-3: The double-guitar quartet **Luna** finishes up a month of New York City club dates.

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Feb. 4: **16 Horsepower** (see the Bowery Ballroom).

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Feb. 3-4: **Frank Black,** the former leader of the dear departed Pixies, drops in for a solo show. On his latest release, "Dog in the Sand," Black reaches back into the archives of rock and roll, where he finds banjos, organ, and pedal steel guitar to augment his scratchy vocals. The effect is as invigorating as a cold shower. Feb. 6: The San Francisco indie-rock foursome **Creeper Lagoon** makes a move from cult faves to big-label artists with its forthcoming Dreamworks release, "Take Back the Universe and Give Me Yesterday."

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—Feb. 3: They say if you lose one sense another grows stronger. In the case of the New Orleans blues guitarist **Snooks Eaglin,** who lost his sight to glaucoma as an infant, it seems as though both his hearing and his touch were improved. Down home in the Crescent City they refer to Eaglin as a human jukebox, so don't be surprised by what you hear mixed into any given solo.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Feb. 1-3: One of the craftiest of all post-bop tenor saxophonists, Joe Henderson also has a gift for melody which found expression in such durable original compositions as "Recorda Me" and "Tetragon." (He also helped introduce such standards as "Blue Bossa" when he co-led an early-sixties band with the trumpeter Kenny Dorham.) The tenor saxophonist **Javon Jackson** and the trombonist **Josh Roseman** front a tribute band that will highlight Henderson's talent as a composer. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Feb. 4: It's a week of tributes. Who better to honor the greatest of all bop saxophonists, Charlie Parker, than **Charles McPherson,** a Detroit native and Birdophile who's been tearing up stages with his extravagant playing ever since he came to attention with Charles Mingus some forty years ago. / The saxophonist **James Carter** may be new-school, but he knows his jazz history. This virtuosic, often boisterous phenomenon salutes Django Reinhardt, the revolutionary guitarist whom Carter boldly turned to for his recent album "Chasin' the Gypsy."

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through Feb. 17, **Mary Cleere Haran,** who has long been the witty apotheosis of cabaret singers. Her voice, with its slight, curling vibrato, suggests Doris Day, and her elegant nose, lean, waving arms, and swan neck recall Loretta Young. But in this show, she displays a surprising side—that of a Broadway singer who can belt out a melody and act (she puts on a funny Brooklyn accent for Rodgers and Hart's "The Girl Friend" and a rodeo twang for their "Way Out West"). Then she quiets down and talks about the nuns who raised her and how "lyrics are little windows into the souls of the people who write them," before melting the room with a slow humming duet of "The Lullaby of Broadway" with Richard Rodney Bennett, her accompanist. ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Peter Mintun** is in attendance.

IRIDIUM
48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—A young guitarist with chops to spare, **Mark Whitfield** (here with his trio through Feb. 4) has the funky fluidity of a pre-pop George Benson bolstered by a deep vein of gospel and blues. His most recent release, "Raw," is an unadorned live recording that catches Whitfield at his most impassioned and hints at the six-string commotion he can regularly churn up. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Feb. 3: **Don Byron** has his own notion of what constitutes the jazz repertoire. For this intrepid clarinettist, such disparate composers as Henry Mancini, Sly Stone, Stephen Sondheim, Robert Schumann, and Raymond Scott are all grist for the mill. Byron's definitely going in the right direction; in recent years the jazz establishment has worn the tunes of Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk, among other icons, down to the bones.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Feb. 2-4: The **Andrew Hill Big Band.** The rejuvenated, ever-iconoclastic pianist and composer Andrew Hill is on a roll. His album "Dusk" was a highlight of last year, as were his galvanic club appearances alongside a crop of admiring younger players. Draped in the raiment of a big band, Hill's serpentine tunes will take on additional heft and tonal diversity. This has all the makings of an authentic jazz event. Dining.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Feb. 1: The **Wynton Marsalis** septet. Marsalis's heart, and best instincts as a

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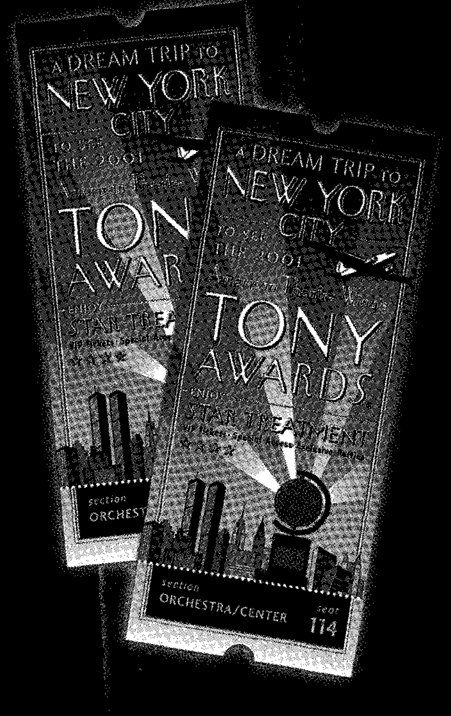

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TABLES FOR TWO

WYANOKA

173 Mott St. (941-8757)—Over the years, this clandestine spot has housed a series of members-only social clubs, but recently it blossomed into an upscale hipster hangout without losing much of its original atmosphere. Open Venetian blinds hang everywhere in the retro-modern, mostly cream-colored room—in the windows, over the light fixtures, and mid-space, where they function as partitions. The voyeur motif is driven home by four black-and-white video monitors situated over the bartender's head, which allow diners to spy on the goings on downstairs at the popular Chinatown speakeasy-cum-lounge Double Happiness. The two establishments have the same owner, so it's perfectly legal, but—except for the view of the fish tank—not terribly interesting.

Eavesdropping on the post-angst art yuppies crowded into the long banquettes provides better entertainment. The young woman wearing a glittery hair clip has been a vegan for three days, so she's agonizing over her boyfriend's delicious-looking foie-gras-and-fig napoleon. Another couple, darkly dressed, are downing a peppercorn-and-Roquefort-laced hanger steak and a dish of tagliatelle with rabbit-and-ginger sausage and wondering aloud about the prospect of MTV's "The Real World" touching down in Williamsburg. The waiter scoffs—he *used* to live in Williamsburg, five years ago, before it became, you know, trendy.

Seafood rules the well-executed, happily schizophrenic menu. A pair of brilliantly concocted soups—roasted golden tomato with crabmeat, double-smoked bacon, and sourdough croutons; and Thai lobster stew with snap peas, shiitakes, lemongrass, and coconut milk—make excellent starters. For the main event, there's a pan-roasted red snapper reinforced with littlenecks, mussels, oven-dried tomatoes, and healthy chunks of artichoke and chorizo. A wasabi fetish surfaces in the mashed parsnips accompanying the seared tuna loin, and in a salmon steak laced with crushed wasabi peas. Fortunately, it's not present in the dessert menu, which offers the left-of-center flavors of pumpkin cheesecake (with gingersnap crust and warm caramel) and blood-orange crème brûlée (with shortbread cookies), as well as a wintry Valrhona chocolate fondue for two. A handful of ports and dessert wines top off the good wine list, should you wish to relax amid the soft light and groovy lounge Muzak for a while. (Open Mondays through Saturdays for dinner. Entrées $14-$19.)

—*Matt Dellinger*

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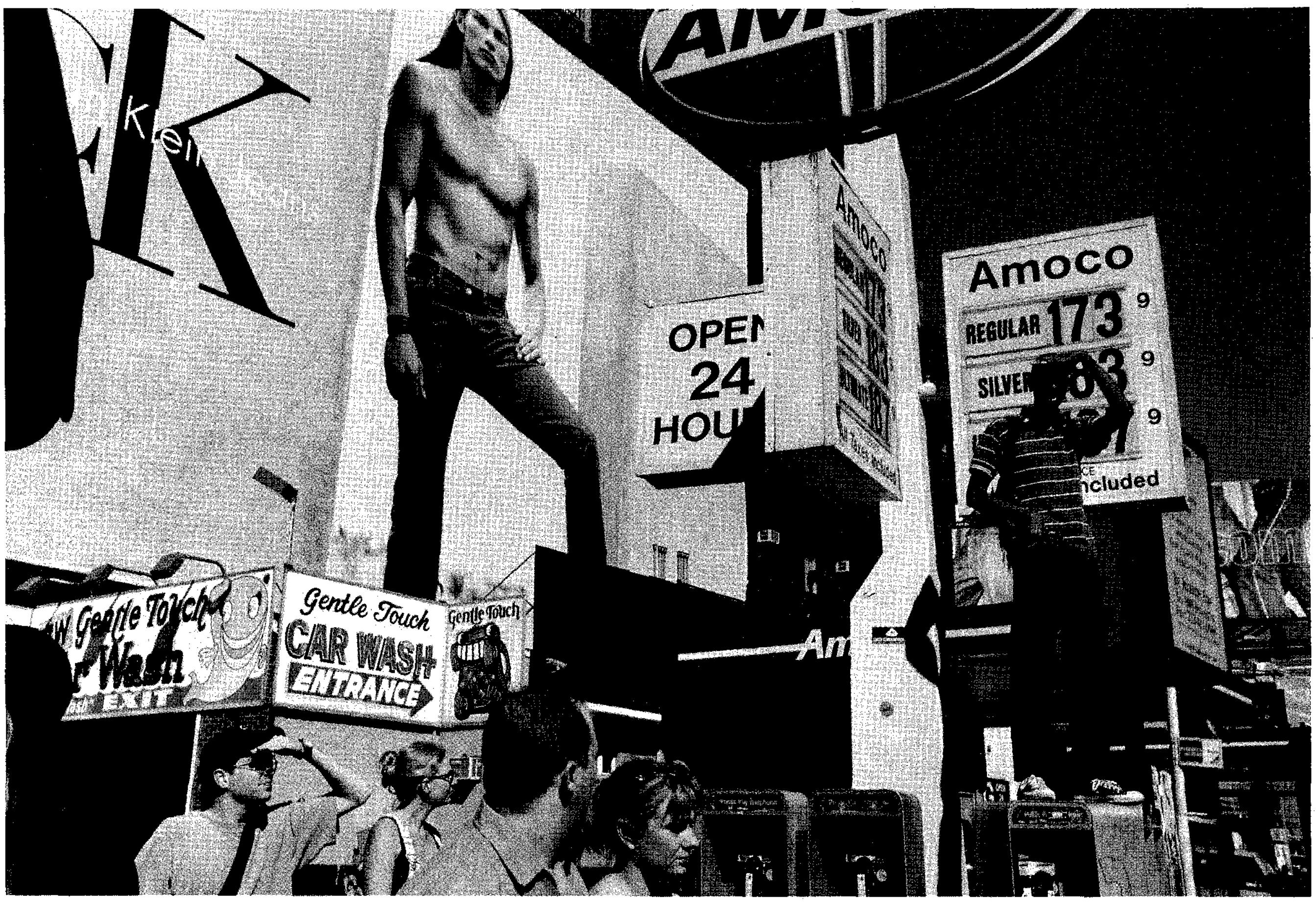
bandleader and composer, lie with a small ensemble. The tight, clustered sound inspires Marsalis the trumpet player: his bravura passages have a directness and purpose that aren't always there when he works within the confines of his full-time band, the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. If previous club dates are any indication, it would be best to arrive hours, if not days, before show time to insure a seat. Feb. 4: The saxophonist **Odean Pope,** a mainstay of Max Roach's bands, knows his horn inside out, and he's only too willing to share the knowledge in each of his marathon solos. Feb. 5: **Andy Laster's** band Hydra continues to score with the ball that Ornette Coleman dropped when he abandoned his inventive, loose-limbed acoustic groups. The new-jazz saxophonist and composer is joined by his longtime rhythm-mates, the drummer **Tom Rainey** and the bassist **Drew Gress,** as well as the audacious trumpeter **Herb Robertson.** Feb. 6: The **Alex Blake** quartet. Judging from the crispness with which he plays the bass and the spicy melodies he draws from it, Blake must have been a flamenco guitarist in a past life. In this life, though, he's been a trusted sideman for pianist Randy Weston and for the full-throated saxophonist Pharoah Sanders.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—Feb. 1: The drummer **Susie Ibarra,** a veteran of the rhythmic contusions of David S. Ware's quartet, stops by with her trio.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Feb. 4: **Ray Drummond,** New York's most reliable bassist, steps out with his own quartet. When you lay down the kind of shag-carpet bottom that Drummond regularly does, anything on top sounds good. Having the saxophonist **Craig Handy** on hand is an added bonus. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.



A work from Gus Powell's "Lunch Pictures" series, in "Straight Arrows," at Meyerowitz (see Photography).

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"The Golden Deer of Eurasia: Scythian and Sarmatian Treasures from the Russian Steppes."** Through Feb. 4. ♦ **"The Still-Lifes of Evaristo Baschenis: The Music of Silence."** Through March 4. ♦ **"Rain of the Moon: Silver in Ancient Peru."** Through April 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Janine Antoni, Shahzia Sikander, and Kara Walker close out MOMA's millennial series of cloth-banner commissions, with three pieces hanging just outside the museum's front door. Walker's "Miss Obedience," the only one immediately recognizable as art, shows a white figure, the distinctly Walkeresque, African-featured Miss of the title, breaking a shackle and her arm to tumble through rabbit-hole-like black space toward the sidewalk. Sikander's "Maligned Monsters" features a Hindu deity and a Greek statue of a woman, which, with the title text, appear to bill a revisionist show of Indian and classical Western art. Antoni's "Mom" is even more disguised—she asked the museum for one of its own distinctive banners and removed the final "A." Through March 13. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—The latest collaboration between the impishness of Frank Gehry and the grandiosity of Thomas Krens is on view in the form of a proposal for a new Guggenheim museum, a sort of Bilbao 2, to be built just below the South Street Seaport, in Manhattan. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—A retrospective devoted to the work of Sol LeWitt, the Tom Sawyerish Conceptualist who gets assistants to execute his ideas, includes a zigguratlike sculpture, wall paintings, books, works on paper, and photographs. Through Feb. 25. ♦ A retrospective of the photographs of Edward Steichen. Through Feb. 4. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays and weekends, 11 to 6, Fridays 1 to 9.)

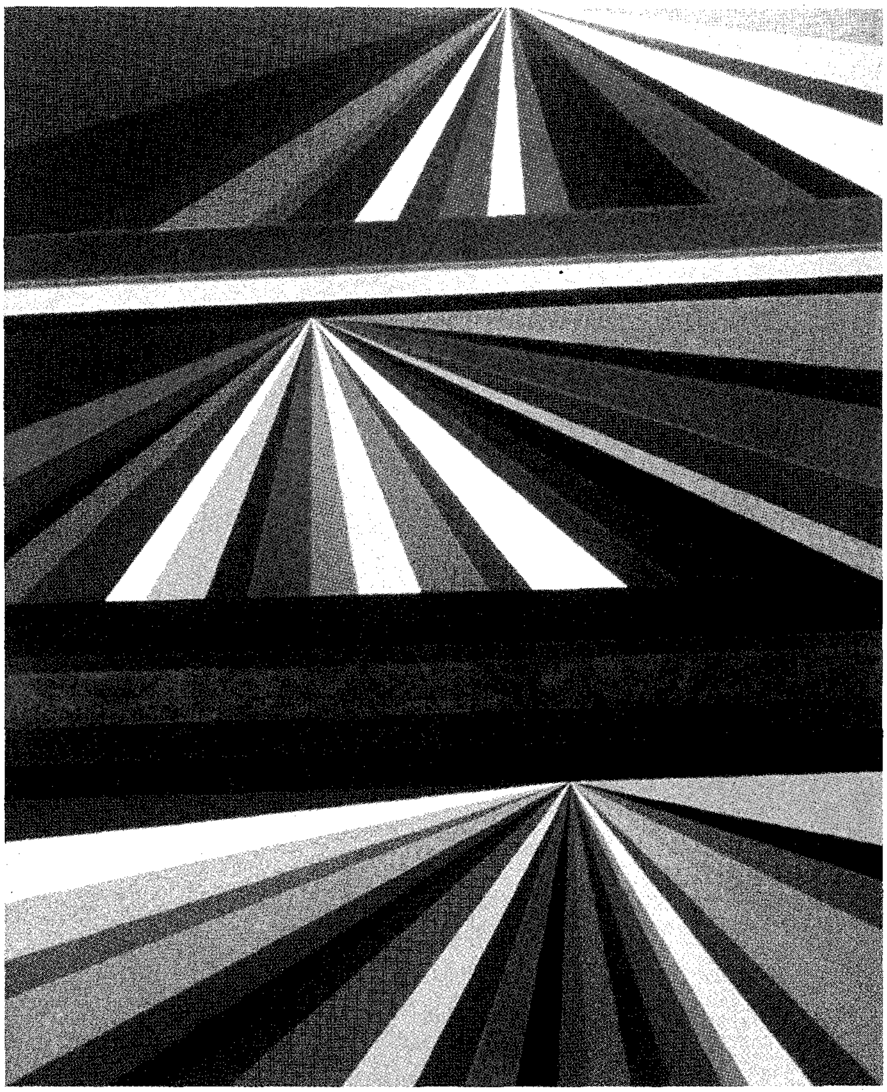
WHITNEY MUSEUM AT PHILIP MORRIS
120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (878-2550)—"A Way with Words." Back in the twentieth century, two distinct traditions of text-based art predominated; Pop art offered neon sign language, and Conceptual art a dry, academic monotone. Lately, artists have created more powerful combinations of text and image which hark back to ancient hieroglyphs. Lorna Simpson's lyrically arranged photo-texts, with acute phrases above barely abstracted imagery, fit the fragmented history of the African-American female into an art-historical bento box. Big-theme exhibitions are notoriously uneven in quality, and some of the other artists on display do come across as kindergarten doodlers. Jack Pierson's derivative sculpture, "Desire, Despair" (the words form a cross, at the "S"), is what one imagines Jenny Holzer might have produced in detention. But Shirin Neshat, Chris Verene, and Glenn Ligon all contribute fine work, making this exhibition worth more than a speed-read. Through March 30. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

ANTHONY CARO
Has Caro's 1987 knighthood gone to his head? Lately it's been easy to feel leery of Sir Anthony's predilection for grand, honorable-sounding projects—first the "Last Judgement" cycle and now the "Duccio Variations," seven sculptures based on an Annunciation at the National Gallery in London. Happily, the new works are as distinctive and forceful as ever. In a range of materials (from Lucite to sandstone), Caro opens up the original panel's cloistered architecture while retaining Duccio's Romanesque arches and even the vase of lilies on the floor. Far from simply honorific, the art-historical connection seems at once playful and tender. Two accompanying groups of works, one based on musical instruments, the other on squat structures that resemble ovens, confirm the sense that Caro's virtuosity can weather approbation. Through Feb. 9. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900.)

JOHN WALKER
If there is a counterpart to Anselm Kiefer working on this side of the Atlantic, it's probably the British-born Walker, whose paintings are as vast, history-obsessed, and dourly lyrical as his German contemporary's. The difference is that Walker hews closer to traditional painting and is more willing to wear his heart on his sleeve. This latest exhibition, titled "Time and Tides," shows two very different sides of his work. One continues Walker's obsession with the First World War, in which his own father was wounded. Giant canvases feature chain-link fencing, scrawled poetry, and a skull-headed sheep-soldier, standing sentry. They feel like pictorial renunciations—memorials, rather than paintings. The "Tides" pictures are landscapes made on the coast of Maine. All feature a strange, hourglass-shaped tidal pool, a cliff, and the sea. With their scarred, glittering surfaces and wintry-autumnal color, they are bleakly beautiful antidotes to a genteel summertime tradition. Through March 3. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550.)



"Untitled (Three-Tier Perspective)," by Mark Grotjahn, at Gorney, Bravin + Lee.

Short List

VITO ACCONCI AND ANA MENDIETA
Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. 315-0470.
Through March 3.

EMILY EVELETH
Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 223-2227.
Through Feb. 10.

ERNESTO PUJOL
Ramis Barquet, 41 E. 57th St. 644-9090.
Through Feb. 17.

JOAN WITEK
CDS, 76 E. 79th St. 772-9555.
Through Feb. 20.

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

JOAN NELSON
Nelson's trademark "Honey, I shrunk art history" style (the titles are a tipoff, with references to Turner, Cole, and Ghirlandaio) yields a predictably meticulous series of landscapes that look more like fragments of paintings than paintings themselves. The surfaces are heavily worked—scraped, sanded, pocked, varnished—to appear antique. This is painting as bonsai, and the thwarted, precious objects can get a little musty. When Nelson lowers her gaze to the realm of comics, borrowing locations from Tin-Tin or infusing a scene from a northern-Renaissance woodcut with what she calls "Rugrats sky and mountain colors," it's like a breath of fresh air. Through Feb. 10. (Robert Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 366-4774.)

JOHN PYLYPCHUK
South Park meets Sigmar Polke in fey collage paintings fashioned from plywood, fabric, wallpaper, and resin (and matchsticks, glitter, sand, and so on). Recurring characters include wolfish bipeds made of fur, as well as stick figures with hearts for heads and glum expressions that are underscored by tiny lines of text like "Mostly you are hurtful" or "My eyes well up with tears from this." This art would not look entirely out of place hanging from refrigerator magnets, but it's precisely the *art brut* earnestness that gives the work its edge. Through Feb. 17. (Petzel, 535 W. 22nd St. 680-9467.)

GROUP SHOW
If you have an appetite for abstraction, this show has some savory choices. Mark Grotjahn's rainbow-colored perspective diagrams are eye-catching, crisp, and deliberately insubstantial—an *amuse-bouche*. David Brody's two dense, beautiful quasi-architectural paintings, whose gray-green microchip vistas seem both panoramic and intimate, make a good main course. Wade Guyton's sculptures in cork and Plexiglas are pleasantly wry side dishes, but don't quite measure up to the other fare. For dessert, the English artist Siobhan Liddell offers an airy, sweet installation composed of almost nothing but copper thread. Through Feb. 3. (Gorney, Bravin + Lee, 534 W. 26th St. 352-8372.)

"HIDDEN IDENTITY"
Few group shows start with a premise as simple as this one: the show is made up of portraits that wouldn't help you identify the subject in a lineup. Among the highlights is Victor Pesce's back-of-the-head mug shot, rendered in delicately calibrated plums and mauves. Richard Bosman offers a water-level view of a swimmer, showing only dark bedraggled hair surrounded by flashing wavelets. Jeffrey Saldinger, who is known for painting exclusively self-portraits, contributes a surprising, silvery *coin d'atelier*. Among the dimly lit easels, mirrors, and bric-a-brac, we recognize the back of the artist's head and one glowing ear. Through Feb. 3. (Harris, 529 W. 20th St. 463-9666.)

"SHADOW DANCING"
A fine, edgy show of distinctive works by New York artists from the late seventies, just before European invasions and an exploding market terminated the insular hubris of the New York art world. People who weren't around then should seek comments from those who were, if the latter aren't tongue-tied with nostalgia. The quiddities—in the cubic lattice of slim wooden bars, by Jackie Winsor; the tiny bronze house, by Joel Shapiro; the horse image, painted by Susan Rothenberg—pertain to a revolt against minimalist impersonality. Back then, any wisp of metaphor could thrill. The frailty of a tangle of thin wire by Alan Saret and the nonchalance of a Mary Heilmann abstract painting were like a reveille to the heart. Of the seventeen artists in this perfectly considered show, one pointedly does not belong: Cindy Sherman, whose little "Film Still" insinuates a whole new deal. Through Feb. 10. (D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 352-9460.)

Short List

AZIZ + CUCHER
Urbach, 526 W. 26th St. 627-0974.
Through Feb. 24.

VERNON FISHER
Cowles, 537 W. 24th St. 925-3500.
Through Feb. 24.

UNA HENRY
I-20 Gallery, 529 W. 20th St. 645-1100.
Through Feb. 10.

KAREN KILIMNIK
303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-0024.
Through Feb. 10.

BHASKAR KRAG
Grimm, 505 W. 28th St. 564-7662.
Through Feb. 10.

ROBERT LONGO
Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100.
Through March 3.

DONA NELSON
Cheim & Reid, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.
Through Feb. 24.

DAVID SALLE
Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111.
Through March 3.

LISA YUSKAVAGE
Boesky, 535 W. 22nd St. 680-9889.
Through Feb. 3.

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

SANTIAGO ARMADA
This Cuban artist's work leans, at times, toward the political, but because Armada (1937-95) worked from inside the revolution—as, among other things, art editor at a Castro-approved paper—his most interesting work lies elsewhere. Several multi-panel cartoons consider existence and solitude. In one, multiple sets of glowing eyes in a dark room turn out to be one man and two mirrors. There's also a pair of Japanese-influenced prints of superimposed rectangles; on closer inspection, each reveals a cartoon figure crouched within. Treatments of sex include a godless Adam's-rib creation scenario and several dancing penises. Through Feb. 10. (Drawing Room, 40 Wooster St. 219-2166.)

MAGGIE CARDELUS
The fanciful wedding cake of shredded photographs hanging from the center of the gallery isn't a mobile. It's more like a web, and its use of snapshots—though the prints are enlarged into expanses of pure, painterly color—seems to refer to the web of family. A single partially intact image, of Cardelus's sister laughing, which is hung separately and relatively conventionally on the wall, may offer a key to the artist's materials and methods, as well as her intentions—she's not averse to making viewers happy. Through Feb. 10. (Deitch, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)

JORDAN CRANDALL
Crandall says he's working to create a post-cinematic language while exposing the dangerous powers of technology, but "Heatseeking," the series of seven short films presented here, still comes off as tech-happy and conventionally cinematic. Commissioned by Insight, a U.S.-Mexican coöperative project, the short works were shot in border zones between San Diego and Tijuana with conventional and surveillance equipment, including infrared cameras. Their stars, generally lithe women bearing little resemblance to any known border crossers or guards, do such things as sneak around in the dark and make dangerous adjustments to a mysterious boiler. All action and no story makes "Heatseeking" look like a preview for a bad Hollywood thriller. Through Feb. 17. (Gering, 476 Broome St. 226-8195.)

Short List

KUTLUG ATAMAN
Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St.
965-0753. Through Feb. 24.

BIRDIE LUSCH
K.S. Art, 73 Leonard St. 219-9918.
Through Feb. 9.

MARTIN MULL
Beitzel, 102 Prince St. 219-2863.
Through Feb. 17.

DENNIS OPPENHEIM
Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.
Through Feb. 28.

YEHUDIT SASPORTAS
Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.
Through Feb. 10.

MARTIN WONG
P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642.
Through Feb. 24.

AUCTIONS & ANTIQUES

CHRISTIE'S EAST
Feb. 5 at 6: An auction of fine wines from France, Germany, Italy, and California. (219 E. 67th St. 606-0400.)

SWANN
Feb. 1 at 10:30 A.M. and 2: Modern-press and illustrated books, including a first octavo edition of "The Rubaiyat," by Omar Khayyam, illustrated and signed by Elihu Vedder; one of two hundred and fifty copies of James Joyce's "Ulysses" illustrated by Matisse and signed by both him and the author; and several copies of books by Dr. Seuss

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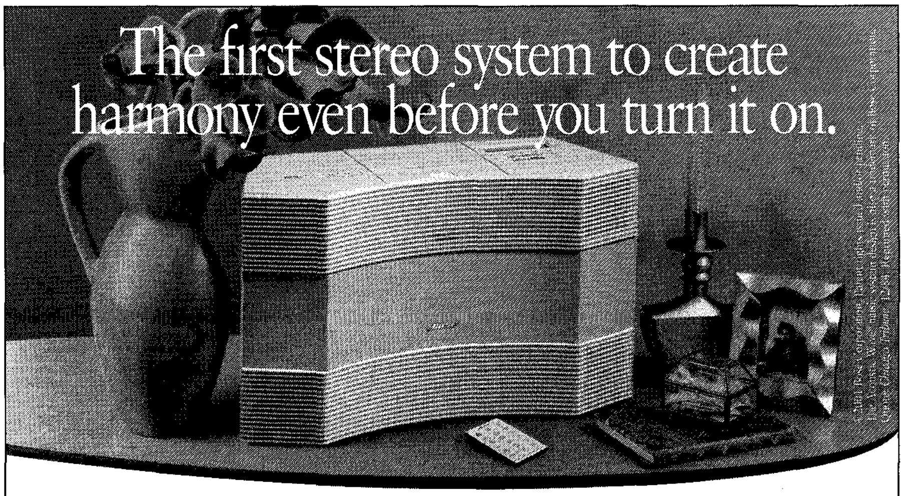
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which the author used as personal gifts, with impromptu drawings on the endpapers. The morning session also features books with work by Rockwell Kent, Arthur Rackham, and N. C. Wyeth. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

NAN GOLDIN
Goldin's work—a visual journal spanning more than thirty years—is often engrossing, but this latest installment seems perfunctory—more of a datebook than a diary. In a corner of the last room, six tender, introspective night cityscapes through hospital windows stand out, successfully exchanging the artist's usual brutal realism for emotional metaphor. They are more rewarding than the portraits in the show, worthy settings for what is now called, only half in jest, "The Family of Nan." Through Feb. 17. (Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200.)

NINO MIGLIORI
Migliori's "Neorealismo" shows postwar Italy in grainy, sentimental peacetime scenes—families gathered, priests smiling—and sharp, funny, surreal moments—women in matching shoes walking in step, monks playing volleyball. Norman Rockwell would have approved. Through March 3. (De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.)

MARIO CRAVO NETO
Neto, best known for his elegant black-and-white work, débuts twenty-five years' worth of color. These fifteen large, exuberant images of his native Brazil take the viewer into rituals associated with the Yoruba deity Esu—god of erotic dreams, among other things—and seem almost, like their subjects, to shine with light and drip with sweat. Through Feb. 10. (Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

RON VAN DONGEN
Someone desperately wants these botanical studies to seem naughty—the show is called "Vulgaris," and the gallery literature draws oddball comparisons with the brothel chronicler E. J. Bellocq as well as the macabre fantasist Joel-Peter Witkin. Saluting stamens and pudendal petals are at a minimum in the front room's white-on-white works—the wholesome roses and tulips in their vases look as if they were meant for a portfolio drop-off at *Martha Stewart Living*. But a series in the back almost earns the innuendo; the works have layers of incredibly rich black tones and a menacing beauty, especially in closeups of a black dahlia and a star-shaped succulent. Through Feb. 18. (Wessel and O'Connor, 242 W. 26th St. 242-8811.)

"AMERICAN"
These deserted landscapes show the country as a wasteland fallen short of mid-twentieth-century idealism. Tim Davis's 2000 color photograph of the illuminated windows of a car dealership at night recalls Edward Hopper's "Nighthawks," while Lewis Baltz's 1977 black-and-white "Nevada" portfolio wanders through the landscape like a scavenger, finding items like a half-intact, half-shattered fluorescent light bulb, left out in the desert to crumble. The artists' strong sense of self-imposed alienation is countered by the hopefulness of their quest: updating the American sublime. Through Feb. 10. (Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 727-3323.)

"SIGHTLINES"
The strengths and weaknesses of these three Asian photographers are well represented in Katsumi Omura's image of a tangled grid of electrical wires, which looks like a terrific modernist abstraction with a chance bonus—a bird swooping through with its wings spread—until viewers realize that the artist has contrived to document the same beautiful accident many times, an idea drained of its impact by repetition. Osamu James Nakagawa's work is the most interesting here; he photographs rain slipping along bullet-train windows and puckering on wire screens, with blurs and reflections and the occasional wandering snail for extra-lonely-feeling, abstraction-interrupting content. Nakagawa likes to compare this series of wet windows to haiku—a cross-medium comparison that would seem arrogant if he hadn't pulled it off dozens of times, like some dogged, melancholy scientist. Kith Tsang Tak Ping, meanwhile, dresses blurry black-and-white nothingness up in the chemical spills and burns of deliberately sloppy darkroom work. Through Feb. 24. (Sepia, 148 W. 24th St. 645-9444.)

"STRAIGHT ARROWS"
These four young photographers—Melanie Einzig, Matt Harnett, Peter Kayafas, and Gus Powell—are updating straight street photography—no casting, no scripting, no digital adjustments, just natural light, old-fashioned cameras, and live action. New York and its citizens—maybe you're in one of these—look better than usual from the artists' distinct, often wry, perspectives. Opens Feb. 3. (Meyerowitz, 580 Broadway. 625-3434.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
Midtown, an Andy Warhol retrospective and "Perfecting Mankind: Eugenics and Photography" will be on display through March 18. Uptown, Carrie Mae Weems's "The Hampton Project" is up through April 1. (Uptown: 1130 Fifth Ave., at 93rd St. Midtown: 1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

THOMAS JOSHUA COOPER
Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405.
Through March 3.

MIRANDA LICHTENSTEIN
Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 255-8450.
Through Feb. 10.

CARLO MOLLINO
Roth Horowitz, 160A E. 70th St. 717-9067.
Through March 3.

EADWEARD MUYBRIDGE
Miller, 20 W. 57th St. 397-3930.
Through Feb. 10.

SHIZUKA YOKOMIZO
Cohan Leslie and Brown, 138 Tenth Ave., at 19th St. 206-8710. Through Feb. 17.

See the museum listings for a photography exhibition at the Whitney Museum.

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
The last two performances this season of **"Carmen,"** with Janice Watson, Olga Borodina, Richard Leech, and Franck Ferrari; conducted by Bertrand de Billy. (Jan. 31 at 8 and Feb. 3 at 1.) ♦ **"Un Ballo in Maschera"** continues its run, with Elena Zelenskaya (in her Met début), Youngok Shin, Elena Zaremba, Francisco Casanova, and Alexandru Agache as an exceptional Anckarström; Plácido Domingo conducts smoothly, but without much fire. (Feb. 1 at 8.) ♦ The house brings back Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's production of Rossini's **"L'Italiana in Algeri,"** with Jennifer Larmore, Paul Austin Kelly, Alessandro Corbelli, and Samuel Ramey leading the cast; Bruno Campanella. (Feb. 2 and Feb. 5 at 8.) ♦ In the last performance this season of **"Aida,"** Gegam Grigorian follows Luciano Pavarotti in the role of Radamès. With Deborah Voigt, Barbara Dever, and Gregg Baker; Paul Nadler. (Feb. 3 at 8.) ♦ **"La Traviata"** returns to the repertory, with Patricia Racette, Roberto Aronica, and Dmitri Hvorostovsky in the leading roles; Jun Märkl. (Feb. 6 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

CHAUSSON'S "KING ARTHUR"
"Le Roi Arthus," the French composer's only opera, faded quickly after its première in 1903; its music may be drenched in the Wagner of "Tristan und Isolde," but it has a lofty idealism and dramatic sweep very much its own. Leon Botstein conducts the American Symphony Orchestra in a concert version of the work; Nicolle Foland, Hugh Smith, and Russell Braun take the leading roles. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. Feb. 4 at 2.)

BOOK CURRENTS
Lady of the House

RODNEY ALAN GREENBLATT

While researching pioneering nineteenth-century feminists, Yaffa Claire Draznin realized that she was in fact more interested in the "unobtrusive lives" of suburban London housewives. In **VICTORIAN LONDON'S MIDDLE-CLASS HOUSEWIFE: WHAT SHE DID ALL DAY** (Greenwood), she seeks to re-create the fabric of these lives—what schooling they had, what their husbands did, what size their houses were, and what kind of clutter those houses contained (stuffed birds, wax flowers, and photograph albums were favorites). Draznin finds that housewives served as financial managers of the household and employers of servants, which gave them significant social clout. As a result, their tastes and priorities—they were keen on labor-saving devices and luxury items—helped shape consumerism as we know it today.

In nineteenth-century America there was a thriving market for instruction manuals that offered recipes, remedies, and other domestic tips. One of the most famous is **THE AMERICAN FRUGAL HOUSEWIFE** (Dover), by Lydia Maria Child, a journalist, novelist, and anti-slavery activist. First published in 1829, the book was designed to help families deal with the recession of the eighteen-twenties; self-denial, it counselled, is "the happiest and most respectable course for you and yours."

Child would certainly have approved of Sherrie A. Inness's mother, whose Depression-era ways meant that her daughter never saw "a morsel of food spoil." Inness's **DINNER ROLES: AMERICAN WOMEN AND CULINARY CULTURE** (forthcoming from Iowa) examines the changing image of the housewife through the first half of the twentieth century. The "dream kitchen" of the nineteen-fifties, full of gleaming appliances, was a sneaky way of persuading women who had been in the wartime workforce to "return to their kitchen responsibilities."

—*Leo Carey*

Books.
[AT BARNES & NOBLE]

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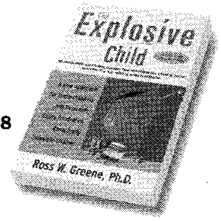

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by Lucinda Bassett

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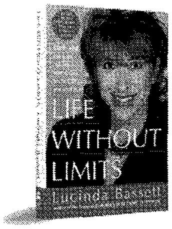

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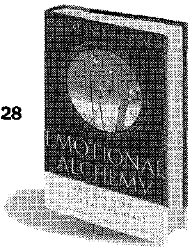

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by Leil Lowndes

The bestselling author of *How to Talk to Anyone About Anything* returns with more advice and proven techniques for attracting interesting and engaging people in both social and professional situations. (Contemporary Books)

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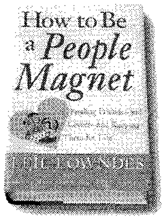

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by Robert Arnot, M.D.

Learn to energize, optimize and work more efficiently towards your goals and discover your personal best with this bestselling, step-by-step program that includes diet and exercise tips. (Little Brown)

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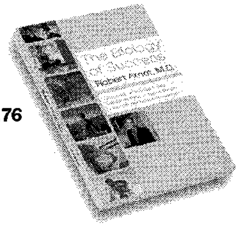

REINVENTING YOURSELF WITH THE DUCHESS OF YORK

by Sarah, The Duchess of York

The Duchess of York presents her unique eight-step plan for achieving your goals, including losing weight, improving your health, changing careers, and starting over after *divorce. Profiles of women who have redefined* and improved their lives provide added motivation. (Simon & Schuster)

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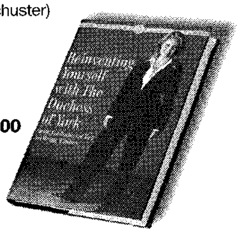

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ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Mozart and Ravel, twin pillars of musical elegance, provide the program for the first week of conductor André Previn's two-week stay with the orchestra. Mr. Previn is quite an elegant musician himself, though not always a particularly penetrating one; he will get to prove his mettle, though, in Mozart's dark and weighty Piano Concerto No. 24 in C Minor (for which he will double as soloist) and in the full ballet version of Ravel's "Ma Mère L'Oye" ("Mother Goose"). The mezzo-soprano Angelika Kirchschlager is the soloist in Mozart's concert aria "Ch'io mi scordi di te," as well as in the song cycle "Shéhérazade," one of Ravel's most exotic scores. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. Feb. 1-3 at 8 and Feb. 6 at 7:30.)

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
Wolfgang Sawallisch conducts Beethoven's "Missa Solemnis," a work that, surprisingly, the orchestra has never mounted before. With the soloists Christine Brewer, Marjana Lipovšek, Robert Dean Smith, and Alfred Reiter, along with the men and women of the Westminster Choir. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Feb. 5 at 8.)

RECITALS

ZOLTÁN KOCSIS
The distinguished Hungarian pianist plays his first New York recital in fourteen years, in a program of Beethoven, Bartók, Mozart, and Liszt. (92nd St. Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100. Jan. 31 at 8.)

"FOCUS! 2001"
The theme of the Juilliard School's seventeenth annual festival of contemporary music, directed by Joel Sachs, may be "100 Years of Italian Music Since Verdi," but the final three concerts concentrate solely on pieces written after 1950, several of which are American premières. Jan. 31 at 8: Ensemble works by Scelsi, Nono, Festa, and others. ♦ Feb. 1 at 8: Another chamber program, including music by Sollima, Castiglioni, Landuzzi, and Riccardo Malipiero. ♦ Feb. 2 at 8: The festival concludes with George Manahan conducting music by Battistelli, Dallapiccola, Einaudi, and Colla, with the Juilliard Symphony. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. For information about tickets, call 769-7406.)

"AMERICAN FIDDLE"
Violin recitals don't get much weirder than this: Maja Cerar, with the pianist John Novacek, performs music by, among others, Ives, Hendrix, Nancarrow, and Sebastian Currier ("Aftersong," a commission from Anne-Sophie Mutter). (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Feb. 1 at 8.)

ALICIA WEILERSTEIN
The young cellist, the daughter of the violinist Donald Weilerstein and the pianist Vivian Weilerstein—each an admired chamber musician—makes her New York début, with the pianist David Laughton, in a program of music by Brahms, Chopin, Bernstein, Rachmaninoff, and the British rock composer Dave Heath. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Feb. 2 at 8.)

LOUIS LOUIS
The members of this group, artists-in-residence at Columbia University, include veteran players with such ensembles as Tafelmusik and Les Arts Florissants; their latest concert is devoted to the art of the seventeenth-century church sonata, with works by Corelli, Purcell, Rosenmüller, and others. (St. Paul's Chapel, Broadway at 116th St. No tickets necessary. Feb. 2 at 8.)

MUSICIANS FROM MARLBORO
The violinist Nathan Cole and the cellist David Soyer are among the musicians performing works by Beethoven, Bartók, and Dvořák (the String Quintet, Op. 97). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Feb. 2 at 8.)

"COMPOSERS OUT FRONT"
The American Composers Orchestra begins its second series of chamber concerts at Joe's Pub with music by Derek Bermel, one of the more vital young talents on the New York scene. The first part of the program includes a classical song cycle and piano piece, but for the second Mr. Bermel performs a set with his band Peace by Piece, which makes music with funk, West African, and R. & B. influences. (425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Feb. 2 at 8:30.)

ST. LUKE'S CHAMBER ENSEMBLE
The ensemble presents new music by composers Kyle Gann (a première), Chen Yi, Roberto Sierra, and Oliver Schneller, hosted by Joan Tower. (Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. Feb. 3 at 2.)

OPERA CAMELOT *When Ernest Chausson (1855-99) met his absurd death in a bicycle accident, the loss to French music was profound: his single, splendid symphony, his songs, and the "Poème," for violin and orchestra—sensual, melancholy, and crafted with the technical precision of an ambitious dilettante—are mainstays of the Gallic repertory. His opera, "Le Roi Arthus," a retelling of the doomed love triangle of King Arthur, Lancelot, and Guinevere, receives a rare concert performance this week at Avery Fisher Hall.*

TONY MILLIONAIRE

PHILHARMONIA VIRTUOSI
Richard Kapp conducts the orchestra in an all-Baroque program, with the recorder virtuoso Michala Petri. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Feb. 3 at 7.)

MARIA GULEGHINA
The soprano, with the pianist Ivary Ilya, makes her U.S. solo-recital début with a concert of Glinka, Rachmaninoff, Rossini, and Donizetti. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. Feb. 4 at 2.)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC ENSEMBLES
A passel of fine Philharmonic players (and a friend, the pianist Stephen Prutsman) take an afternoon off for a concert of Mozart, Dohnányi (the Serenade for String Trio), and Dvořák. (Merkin Concert Hall. 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Feb. 4 at 3.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER: "A GREAT DAY IN NEW YORK"
This week's program of New York composers seems to be an especially volatile mix, from the sexy Afro-Cuban music of Paquito D'Rivera to the Germanic severity of Gunther Schuller and Mario Davidovsky; pieces by Zhou Long, Anthony Davis, and John Zorn and songs by Ned Rorem and Derek Bermel will lie somewhere in between, or beyond. The performers include Susan Graham, David Starobin, and the Borromeo String Quartet. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5788. Feb. 4 at 5.)

EROICA STRING QUARTET
Founded in 1993, the Eroica is a British quartet that concentrates on composers of the Romantic era. Their investigations of mid-nineteenth-century performance editions have lightened and softened their playing to a vanishing point of interpretive subtlety, unloading much of the emotion many associate with Romantic music in the process; whether this is a revelation or an eccentricity will be up to the listener, but it is certainly striking. Their New York début takes place at the Frick Collection, with a program of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Schumann. (1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Feb. 4 at 5.)

SUMI JO
The acclaimed coloratura soprano performs a concert combining classical songs and arias with Broadway show tunes, accompanied by the pianists Tom Muraco and Mike Renzi and the Orchestra of St. Luke's, conducted by Ettore Stratta. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Feb. 6 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

TRACK RECORDS
In some respects it's as if the Summer Olympics in Sydney had never happened; with the time delay and the taped television coverage, the Games received their lowest ratings in thirty years. But tell that to Allen Johnson. The American didn't win a medal in the hundred-and-ten-meter hurdles, an event he took the gold in four years earlier. After his failure Down Under, Johnson considered quitting. But he didn't, and now the twenty-nine-year-old athlete has a chance to get his confidence back in the sixty-meter hurdles at the ninety-fourth annual Millrose Games. He's won this race here three times before, but he'll still have to best, among other competitors, his training partner, Terrence Trammell, who came home from Sydney with a silver medal. Other faces to watch include the gold medalists in the men's and women's pole vault, Nick Hysong and Stacy Dragila. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6741. Feb. 2, starting at 5:45.)

READINGS
Jan. 31 at 6:30: The actors Viola Davis, David Margulies, Kate Burton, and Schuyler Chapin open the seventeenth season of "Selected Shorts" with a reading of works by Anton Chekhov, W. Somerset Maugham, Shay Youngblood, and Alice Munro. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) ♦ Feb. 1 at 7: The poet Mark Doty reads from his memoir, "Still Life with Oysters and Lemon: On Objects and Intimacy." (Three Lives & Company, 154 W. 10th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Feb. 1 at 8: The *New Yorker* writer Hilton Als, the novelist Russell Banks, the academic Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the poet Nikki Giovanni, and other writers pay tribute to James Baldwin with a reading of his work. (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500.) ♦ Feb. 1 at 8: By Peter Carey, from his novel "True History of the Kelly Gang," and by Patrick McGrath, from his novel "Martha Peake." (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.)

TALK
Feb. 4 at 7:30: The essayist Roger Rosenblatt discusses youth and aging with the writers Alice McDermott, Frank McCourt, Jhumpa Lahiri, and George Plimpton. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)

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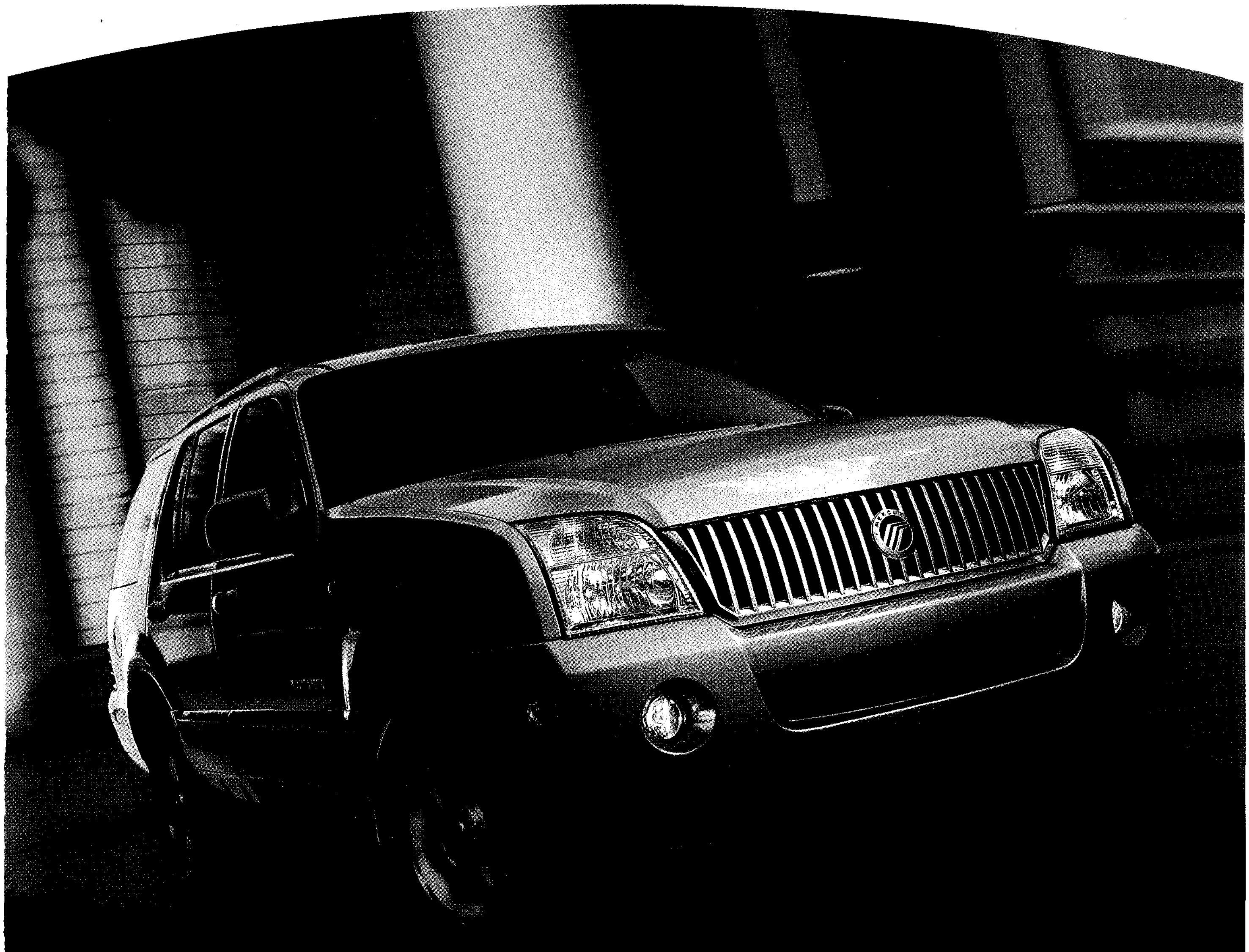

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MOVIES OPENING

FALLEN ANGELS PARADISE
An Egyptian film about the death of a Cairo drug addict, directed by Ossama Fawzi. In Arabic. Opening Feb. 1. (Anthology Film Archives.)

FEVER
Alex Winter directed this psychological thriller about a Brooklyn artist (Henry Thomas) who becomes paranoid after a murder occurs in his building. Opening Feb. 2. (The Screening Room.)

IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Feb. 2.

THE INVISIBLE CIRCUS
A drama based on the novel by Jennifer Egan, about a teen-ager (Jordana Brewster) who travels to Europe to find out why her sister (Cameron Diaz) committed suicide. Directed by Adam Brooks. Opening Feb. 2.

LEFT BEHIND: THE MOVIE
Kirk Cameron plays a news reporter investigating the sudden disappearance of much of the world's population, in this thriller based on the series of fundamentalist-Christian novels. Opening Feb. 2.

THE MILLION DOLLAR HOTEL
Wim Wenders directed this ensemble film centered on the death of a junkie in a run-down Los Angeles hotel. With Mel Gibson, Jeremy Davies, and Milla Jovovich. Opening Feb. 2.

NICO AND DANI
A drama about two best friends who are pulled apart by their diverging sexual identities. Directed by Cesc Gay. In Spanish. Opening Feb. 2.

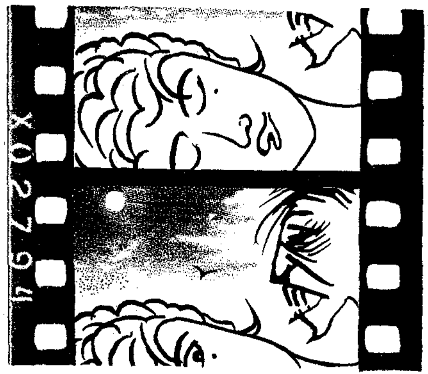
VALENTINE
Jamie Blanks ("Urban Legend") directed this horror film in which four girlfriends are stalked by a man they all rejected long ago. Opening Feb. 2.

FILM NOTES

BEFORE NIGHT FALLS
At its best, Julian Schnabel's second film is a memoir of easy and raffish good times—the endless summer days at the beginning of the Cuban Revolution. Schnabel adapted an autobiographical memoir by the poet and novelist Reinaldo Arenas (Javier Bardem), a homosexual who was initially a participant in the revolution, then a victim of it, and was finally allowed to leave Cuba in 1980. Arenas settled in New York, wrote a great deal, and, suffering from AIDS, committed suicide here in 1990. Schnabel doesn't tell this story coherently: characters appear or disappear without explanation, and we don't always know where we are. The method is closer to collage than to Hollywood script construction, but Schnabel works sensually, and that makes up for a lot. Bardem, who has the face of a shy, smiling bull, gives a performance of great charm.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 1/8/01.) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

CAST AWAY
Tom Hanks, a cheerful, bullying American efficiency expert, finds himself with nothing but time on his hands after his airplane crashes and he's left stranded on a desert island. The greatest thing about this old-fashioned adventure film is its extraordinary physical detail—for a good three-quarters of an hour Hanks doesn't say a word as he re-creates the elements of civilization. The director, Robert Zemeckis, and the screenwriter, William Broyles, Jr., attend to such things as the peculiar noise that the wind makes in a cave and the moaning singsong of a whale just before it surfaces. The movie dissolves irony: as much as possible it brings us back to the essence of our physical existence. It's the best Robinson Crusoe picture ever made.—*D.D.* (12/18/00) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia I and II, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.)

CHUNHYANG
Imagine a cross between a Homeric rhapsode, chanting one of the epics in front of a roaring fire, and the blues singer Muddy Waters. That's roughly the sound produced by the great Korean entertainer Cho Sang Hyun. As the film opens, he sits onstage before a contemporary audience and sings of an eighteenth-century Korean Romeo and Juliet. Then we see the tale: in Namwon Province, the governor's son—fifteen-year-old Mongryong (Cho Seung Woo), who has a man's voice and a man's determination—falls in love with, pursues, and immediately marries Chunhyang (Lee Hyo Jung), the beautiful daughter of a courtesan. The scenes of the slender teen-agers courting and making love have a delicate erotic strength—a mixture of shyness and lust—that is nearly unimaginable in a modern Western setting. When Mongryong goes away to Seoul to study, his bride falls into the hands of the evil new provincial governor, who wants to turn her into a courtesan. Throughout, the story is sung to us—it's a lyrical epic—so we accept the absence of psychological realism and the abrupt plot turns. Directed by Im Kwon Taek, who has made more than ninety films. In Korean.—*D.D.* (1/22/01) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)



F

CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON
The new Ang Lee film is scripted in Cantonese and Mandarin and set in the China of the early nineteenth century, although we could be watching a fable from any time in the last millennium, or from no time at all. Yu Shu Lien (Michelle Yeoh), probably the least excitable action heroine in modern movies, is given a sword by Li Mu Bai (Chow Yun Fat), for safekeeping. Needless to say, it is soon stolen, and the hunt is on. When pursuing a likely suspect, Mu Bai and Shu Lien tend to take the quickest route, whether it's up a wall, over a roof, across a lake, or, best of all, from tree to tree. They don't fly so much as dance through the air, taking fairy-tale strides. Athletic honors are shared between Yeoh and Zhang Ziyi, who plays a rebellious young noblewoman with a fiery past. The outright winner is Ang Lee, who is at once dependably stylish and smartly unpredictable.—*Anthony Lane* (12/11/00) (Angelika Film Center, Astor Plaza, BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 64th and 2nd.)

FAITHLESS
Marianne (Lena Endre) is an actress, married to a conductor named Markus (Thomas Hanzon). They have a young daughter, Isabelle (Michelle Gylemo), and a disreputable best friend, David (Krister Henriksson). All is well until sex marches in, closely followed by love, with divorce bringing up the rear. The whole sorry episode is recounted by a troubled and impatient Marianne to an aging writer (Erland Josephson), who is either recalling her or imagining her. The movie was scripted by Ingmar Bergman (who no longer makes movies) and directed by Liv Ullmann, the greatest of his leading ladies; comparing it with their former collaborations, you have to say that not much has changed in the lives of Swedes. The earnestness of attitude, the grimness of the humor, and the careful compositions will perplex audiences too young to have seen Bergman movies and sadden, mostly by force of nostalgia, those devoted moviegoers who were raised on little else. Endre is intensity made flesh, but you can't help longing for a glimpse of Ullmann herself. In Swedish.—*A.L.* (1/29/01) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Union Square.)

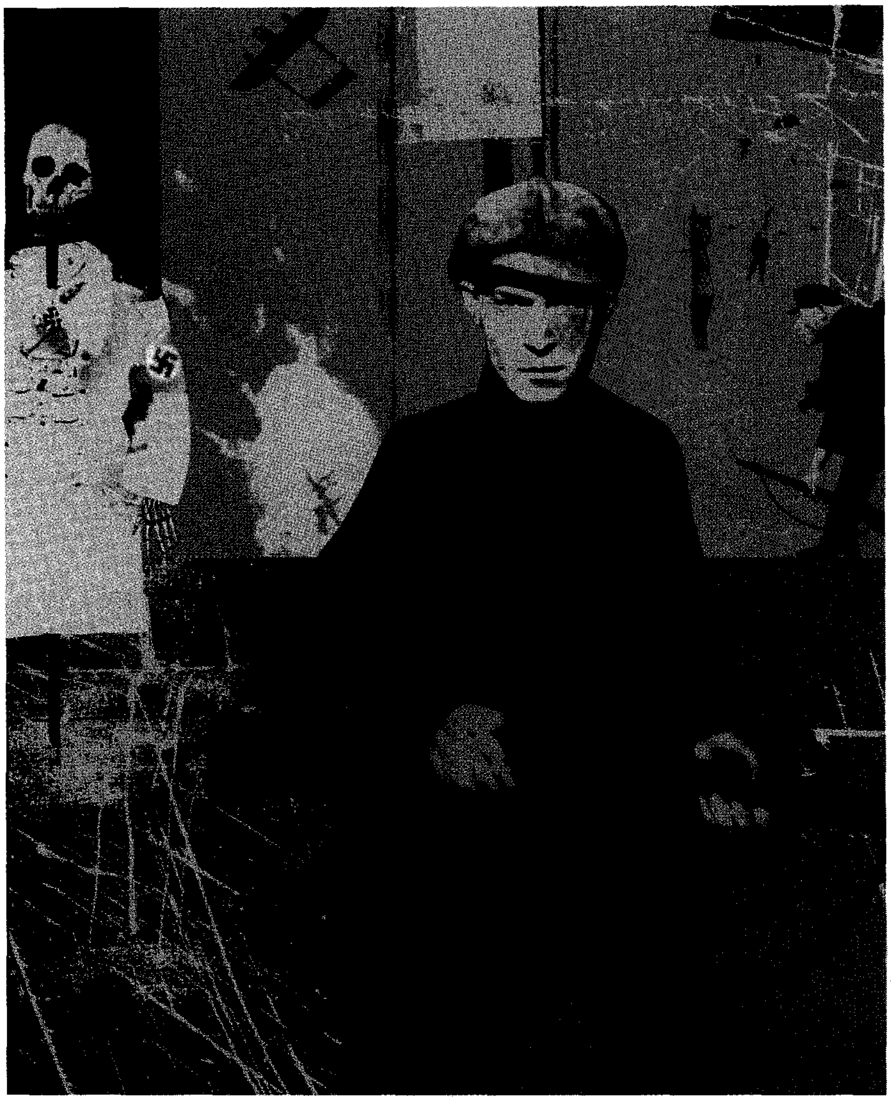
THE GIFT
After the snows of "A Simple Plan," Sam Raimi warms up by venturing south; his new movie was shot in Savannah, Georgia, although it still tries to chill the blood. Cate Blanchett stars as Annie, who combines the demanding roles of widow, single mother, clairvoyant, and shrink. One of her clients (Hilary Swank) complains of a violent husband (Keanu Reeves), who not only menaces Annie but ends up taking the rap for the disappearance of a local good-time girl (Katie Holmes). Add Greg Kinnear as an ominously pleasant wimp, and you have a full-strength cast bending its talents to fit a small piece of Gothic nonsense. You get sharp frights and looming fogs, plus innumerable nods to the perils of water, but running underneath it all is a sluggish solemnity, a hint that these horrors are meant to be important. As Raimi's budgets have grown, his cackling sense of fun has begun to shrivel. With Giovanni Ribisi, in a performance he may wish to forget.—*A.L.* (1/15/01) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

THE HOUSE OF MIRTH
The evidence suggests that Edith Wharton may be easier and more rewarding to film than Henry James. "The Age of Innocence" returned Martin Scorsese to his old, obsessive form, and now the British director Terence Davies has been inspired to his best work by Wharton's earlier and less elaborate novel—her first major success, which sold a hundred and forty thousand copies in its first couple of months. Whether moviegoers will match that enthusiasm is hard to tell; there is grace and passion on show here, but they are firmly and gradually stifled. By the film's close, the weight of the wrong done to the heroine, Lily Bart, feels unredeemed. Gillian Anderson lends Bart a fine air of pride and craving. As she spurns the offer of a safe marriage from a property tycoon (Anthony LaPaglia), or of fleshly compromise with the porcine Gus Trenor (Dan Aykroyd), we believe both in her principles and in the certainty of her doom. The film was shot in Scotland, and it shows; this could not be the New York of 1905, or of any era, yet you can still be convinced by the swift concentration of Davies's method.—*A.L.* (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (Paris.)

THE LEGEND OF RITA
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Film Forum.)

O BROTHER, WHERE ART THOU?
Although the new Coen brothers picture is set in the Depression, the mood of the tale is a deliberate antidepressant. Dark things happen from time to time, but they are rendered with comic glee. Are the Coens being withering or irresponsible when they turn a fiery rally of Klansmen into an occasion for slapstick? Few dogs could be shaggier than the plot, in which three escaped convicts (George Clooney, John Turturro, and Tim Blake Nelson) take a circuitous route home, tripping over a string of Homeric jokes—sultry sirens on a riverbank, John Goodman as a smilingly brutal Cyclops—along the way. The result is never less than enjoyable, and Clooney looks particularly upbeat, but some viewers may sense a fatal lack of grip; undetained by plausibility, this jest of a movie feels even more directionless than its heroes.—*A.L.* (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (BAM Rose Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Sutton 1 and 2, and Union Square.)

THE PLEDGE
Glum, affecting realism from Sean Penn, directing his third film. In the Reno area, a retired police detective, Jerry Black (Jack Nicholson), becomes convinced that a rapist-murderer who strikes at little girls is about to strike again. Jerry is a good man, but he's so obsessed with the case that he loses his judgment. He takes in a battered waitress (Robin Wright Penn) and her little daughter, and with horror we realize that his feelings for the girl won't stop him from using her as a lure. The movie, based on a novel by the late Swiss writer Friedrich Dürrenmatt, offers a bleak view of isolated people living close to madness. The despair comes heavily and unrelentingly—the colors are mainly gray, the cli-



At Walter Reade, "Come and See," a film about the Nazi invasion of Belorussia.

mate wintry—but it feels authentic, and, as a sustained mood, it pulls us into the story. With Sam Shepard and Aaron Eckhart as cops, and Vanessa Redgrave, Helen Mirren, and Mickey Rourke as townspeople. A worthy movie, but don't go expecting an easy time of it.—*D.D.* (1/22/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and Union Square.)

SAVE THE LAST DANCE

A hip-hop fairy tale. Julia Stiles, the reigning queen of teen movies, plays Sara, a ballet dancer and high-school senior who moves to inner-city Chicago after her mother dies in a car crash. There, she mixes with her new classmates and learns to use "slammin'" as an adjective. Her love interest is Derek (Sean Patrick Thomas), a Georgetown-bound scholar who performs his own delicate dance: he's ambitious, yet he's trying to maintain his homeboy status. The movie's best scenes are its intimate tutorials—Derek teaches Sara how to sit, stand, and walk the way black people do. Eventually, they kiss, and the only people who really freak out are the old white ones—there's a funny scene on the El where they vamp in front of a disapproving lady. The dancing is surprisingly sedate; less so are Stiles's outfits. It may be a long time before she lives down the Princess Leia hair style she sports in the final scenes.—*Michael Agger* (Battery Park 16, Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE

Or, how to blow a really good idea. The director E. Elias Merhige, noting the deathless appeal of F. W. Murnau's "Nosferatu," has decided to recreate the making of the film. We are transported to nineteen-twenties Berlin for scenes of dreary decadence and from there to a rural movie set, where the obsessive Murnau (John Malkovich) struggles to control the eccentric conduct of Max Schreck (Willem Dafoe), his leading man. "Nosferatu" was one of the earliest "Dracula" adaptations, and it remains the best, but you would never know that from the amateurish mania that prevails here. Merhige buys happily into the rumor that Schreck was a real vampire—bad news for Catherine McCormack, who plays the love interest, and finds that Schreck is only interested in her neck.—*A.L.* (1/15/01) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, State, Union Square, and Waverly.)

SNATCH

Guy Ritchie caused a stir—mistaken by some for a storm—with his first feature, "Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels." Not wishing to tamper with a winning formula, he has returned to the scene of the crime, delivering a further batch of never quite credible Cockneys. They have names like Bullet Tooth Tony (Vinnie Jones) and Brick Top (Alan Ford), and they converse in the artful patois that Ritchie continues to sell as echt. The plot, this time, is more convoluted, involving a diamond theft and a series of boxing matches, none of which, naturally, go according to plan. Ritchie's strength is the running gag; one can only grow fond of a dog that has swallowed a rubber toy and thus squeaks when it tries to bark. His weakness is a hectic, self-advertising style that wearies what it's meant to quicken; you come out feeling sated and soiled. The cast is honored by the presence of Benicio Del Toro, first seen in the garb of a Hasidic Jew, and especially by Brad Pitt, who plays what is rumored to be an Irish Gypsy, although no one, least of all the other characters, can decipher what he has to say.—*A.L.* (1/29/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

STATE AND MAIN

Movies about movies are seldom as funny as they should be; maybe it's because, as targets go, the film business is about as hard to hit as a brontosaurus. This latest assault is by David Mamet; his hero, played by Philip Seymour Hoffman, is sincere and sensitive, whereas pretty much everyone around him is a bullheaded jerk. Somehow, this setup lacks the gleaming ring of truth. The location is a sweet small town that is infested by the cast and crew of a period drama, including the star (Alec Baldwin) with a taste for underage girls, the leading lady (Sarah Jessica Parker) with a distaste for nudity, and the calmly despairing director (William H. Macy). With actors like these, the whole thing should have been a riot, but Mamet has always been more tough guy than funnyman, and you find yourself waiting expectantly for laughs that never come.—*A.L.* (Battery Park 16, East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Union Square.)

TRAFFIC

Tremendous stuff from the first shot to the last. Steven Soderbergh's vivid and wide-spanning view of the "war on drugs" presents three parallel stories, each with its own look and style: the furtive and ambiguous work of two Mexican state troopers (Benicio Del Toro and Jacob Vargas); the frantic investigations of the new American drug czar (Michael Douglas), who discovers that his beautiful, intelligent sixteen-year-old daughter (Erika Christensen) is freebasing cocaine; and the luxurious life of a San Diego woman (Catherine Zeta-Jones) who tries to hold on to her fortune when her drug-kingpin husband (Steven Bauer) is arrested and made to stand trial. The first story is photographed in tobacco-stain brown, the second with blue filters, the third in bright sunshine—all by Soderbergh himself, who puts the camera on his shoulder and throws us into the middle of the action. Individually, the scenes play with superb toughness, and the over-all impression is one of high intelligence and great good humor threading its way through a morass.—*D.D.* (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HER

Two or three things must be said of Jean-Luc Godard's essayistic gambol through circa-1967 Paris, which follows a wife and mother who streetwalks to buy middle-class comforts. First, the steadily intensifying closeup of a cup of coffee as the antiheroine delivers a monologue is one of the most hypnotic shots in movie history. Second, Marina Vlady, as the prostitute, has a fierce, fleshy beauty matched with an intoxicatingly perplexing aggressive-recessive personality. And third, Godard's portrait of a metropolis whose citizens "take better care of objects than of people" is both offhand and eerie, like a prescient snapshot. In French.—*Michael Sragow* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Feb. 3.)

YI YI (A ONE AND A TWO)

Marvellous. It begins with a wedding and ends with a funeral, and, in a style that could only be called radiantly matter-of-fact, Edward Yang's movie encompasses the life of a large Taiwanese family and such central elements of middle-class existence as business ethics and the disillusionment of reaching the age of forty-five. The characters live in an Americanized work environment, yet certain emotions nearly lost to Americans, such as modesty and shame, still rule their lives. Yang works very deliberately; you have to slow yourself down to get into the pace of the movie, but once you do every shot seems momentous. He doesn't carve up the space, he frames it, and he excels at portraiture. A character stands alone, in a doorway, or at a window,

JOHN RITTER

and Yang is so attentive that he gets the revelation that he wants, tenderly, quietly, before moving on. With Wu Nienjen as the executive father and Jonathan Chang as his indomitably curious little boy. In English, Hokkien, and Mandarin.—*D.D.* (1/8/01) (Cinema Village.)

YOU CAN COUNT ON ME
The first-rate actress Laura Linney—bland on the surface but with angry impulses churning underneath—gives a detailed and involving performance as a single working mother in a small and somewhat boring upstate New York town. When her screwup of a kid brother (Mark Ruffalo) returns from Alaska, she's torn between tossing him out and letting him stay on and become a companion to her fatherless son (Rory Culkin). The movie was written and directed by the playwright and screenwriter Kenneth Lonergan, who pays close attention to the way so many of us are divided between good and bad impulses—including bad impulses we desperately need to act on if we're not going to feel half-dead. Lonergan's work is quiet but intense, and Ruffalo—dark and sensual and agonizingly confused—gives a heartbreaking performance.—*D.D.* (12/18/00) (Empire 25, 59th Street East Cinema, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

ANTITRUST
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.

BILLY ELLIOT (10/30/00)
Eastside Playhouse, Empire 25, and Village East Cinemas.

CHOCOLAT
Angelika Film Center, Battery Park 16, Cinema I, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square.)

A HARD DAY'S NIGHT
Film Forum.

SUGAR AND SPICE
Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Sutton 1 and 2, and Village Theatre VII.

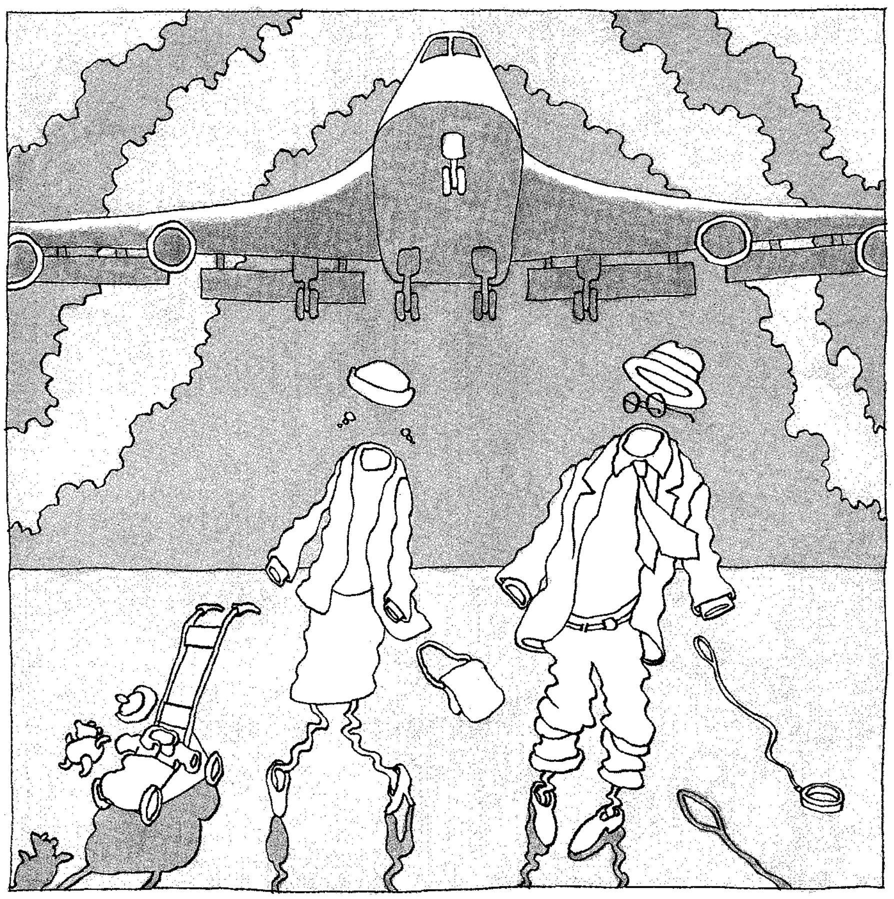
THE WEDDING PLANNER
84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.

WHAT WOMEN WANT (12/25/00 & 1/1/01)
Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St. (945-3418).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.



Opening February 3, "Left Behind: The Movie," a thriller about the Rapture.

GAHAN WILSON

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through March 4: Films selected by the New York Film Critics Circle. Feb. 3 at 2: "The Player" (1992, Robert Altman). ♦ Feb. 3 at 4:30: "Two or Three Things I Know About Her" (†). ♦ Feb. 3 at 6:30: "Last Year at Marienbad" (1961, Alain Resnais; in French). ♦ Feb. 4 at 2: "The Right Stuff" (1983, Philip Kaufman).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (777-3456)—Feb. 1-2 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Watermelon Man" (1970, Melvin Van Peebles). ♦ Feb. 3-4 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Rififi" (1955, Jules Dassin; in French). ♦ Feb. 5 at 4:30, 6, 7:30, and 9: "See the Sea" (1997, François Ozon; in French). ♦ Feb. 6 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Caught" (1995, Robert Young). ♦ A five-week retrospective of Krzysztof Kieslowski's "The Decalogue" continues. Feb. 2-6: "Episodes 5 and 6" (1987; in Polish).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Feb. 8 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Fellini Satyricon" (1969, Federico Fellini; in Italian). ♦ Through April 2, a Marion Davies retrospective. Feb. 5: "Beverly of Graustark" (1926, Sidney Franklin) and "Operator 13" (1934, Richard Boleslavsky).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Feb. 6 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Late August, Early September" (1998, Olivier Assayas; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through Feb. 13: The first two seasons of "The Sopranos," along with films selected by David Chase, the show's creator. Feb. 1 at 2:30 and Feb. 2 at 8: "Cul-de-Sac" (1966, Roman Polanski). ♦ Feb. 1 at 6 and Feb. 2 at 2:30: "The Public Enemy" (1931, William Wellman). ♦ Feb. 2 at 6: "Mean Streets" (1973, Martin Scorsese). ♦ Feb. 3 at 12:30: Episodes 1-4. ♦ Feb. 3 at 5:30: Episodes 5-7. ♦ Feb. 4 at 12:30: Episodes 8-11. ♦ Feb. 4 at 5:30: Episodes 12-13. ♦ Feb. 5 at 1: Episodes 14-17. ♦ Feb. 5 at 6: Episodes 18-20. ♦ Feb. 6 at 1: Episodes 21-24. ♦ Feb. 6 at 6: Episodes 25-26.

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Feb. 2-6: "Come and See" (1985, Elem Klimov; in Russian).

FOR SOME REAL ENTERTAINMENT DURING THIS ELECTION YEAR:

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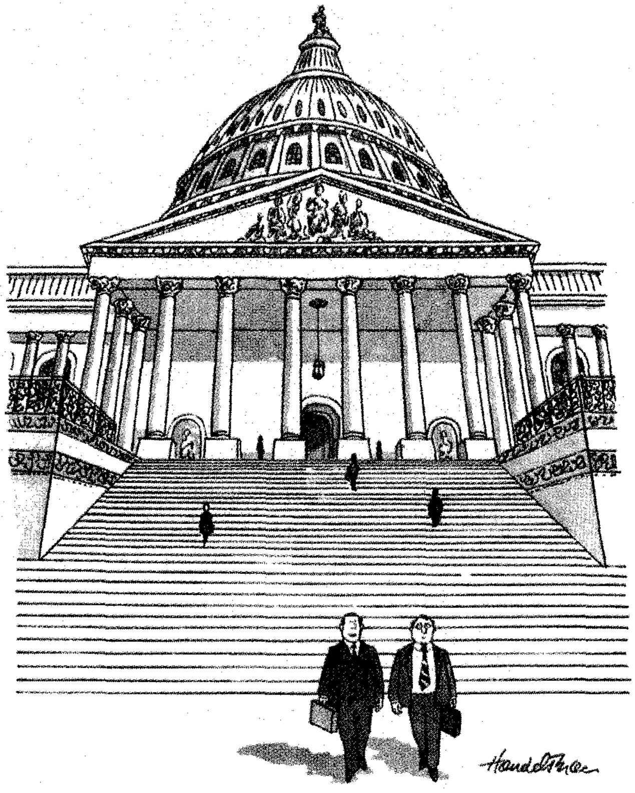
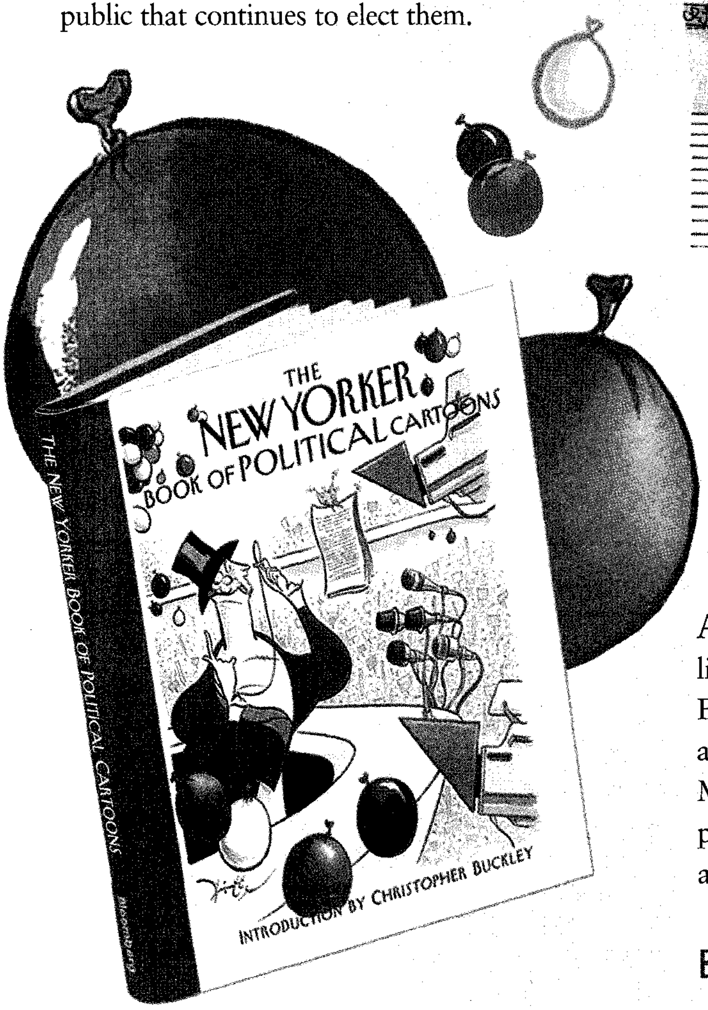


"YOU'VE BEEN AROUND HERE LONGER THAN I HAVE. WHAT ARE 'CONGRESSIONAL ETHICS'?"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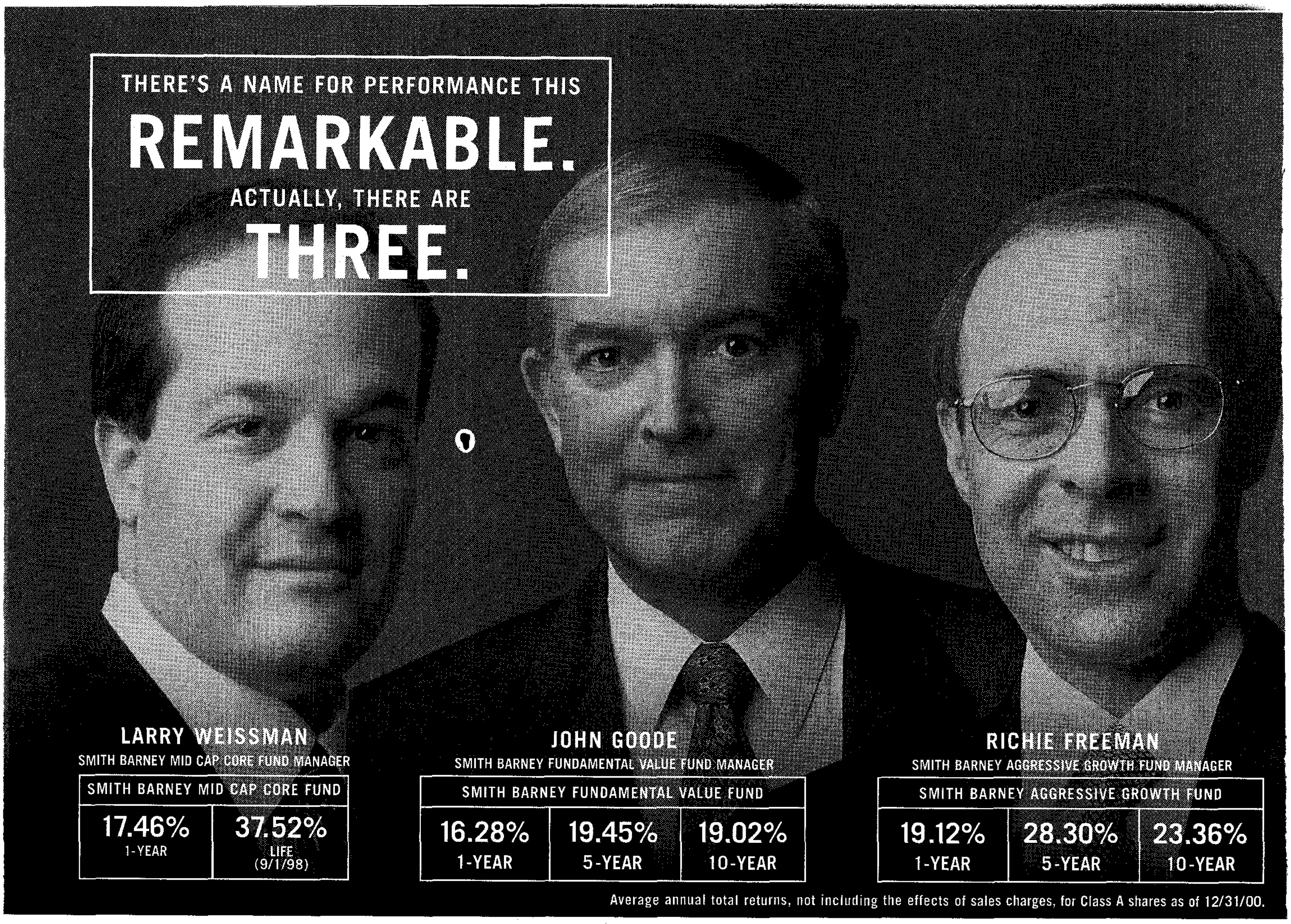

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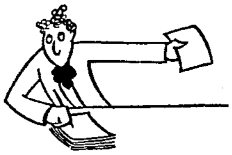
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

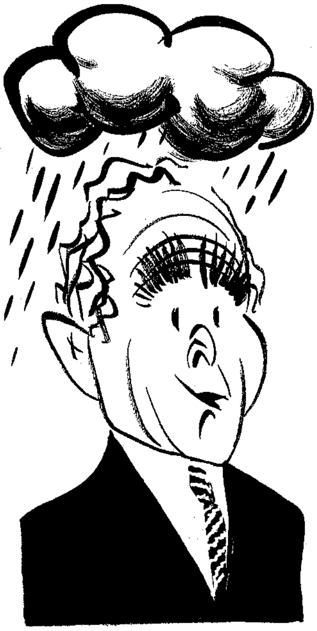
COMMENT
THE WORD FROM W.



George W. Bush's first week as President of the United States began with a speech that, taken as a whole and judged purely as a piece of writing, was shockingly good. It was by far the best Inaugural Address in forty years; indeed, it was better than all but a tiny handful of all the Inaugurals of all the Presidents since the republic was founded. That praise is not, or not necessarily, quite as high as it may sound: except for Lincoln's imperishable second Inaugural, scattered passages from his first and from the speeches of certain of the greats (Washington, Jefferson, Franklin Roosevelt, one or two others), and, arguably, Kennedy's 1961 address, the Presidential Inaugural is not a distinguished branch of American literature or even of American rhetoric. To read all fifty-four addresses, one after another, is to traverse a wasteland where pomposity, banality, and incoherence are more often relieved by mediocrity than by brilliance.

The speech Bush read was different. It was tightly constructed. Its rhythms flowed pleasingly. Its sentences were sculpted. Its sentiments, however familiar, were expressed in language that was consistently fresh, at once elevated and unpretentious, and almost entirely free of bombast, cliché, or sloganeering. By the "We're No. 1" standards of patriotic speechmaking, the version of the American civic religion it set forth was without arrogance, and its admissions of imperfection abjured scapegoating. Its description of America as "a slave-holding society that became a servant of freedom" was a cleansing acknowledgment of America's original sin. In affirming that what binds America is not "blood or birth or soil" but "ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds," and that "every immigrant, by embracing these ideals, makes our country more, not less, American," it rejected nativism and deftly sketched both the relevance and the limits of multiculturalism. And consider this passage, outstanding but by no means atypical:

> In the quiet of American conscience, we know that deep, persistent poverty is unworthy of our nation's promise. And whatever our views of its cause, we can agree that children at risk are not at fault. Abandonment and abuse are not acts of God, they are failures of love.



Here the cant phrase "at risk" is freshened by juxtaposition with "at fault," making the point that the origins (and, by extension, the pathologies) of poverty are rooted more in social than in personal responsibility. In substance if not in expression, it was a speech that, with five minutes of blue-pencilling, could as easily have been delivered by the rightful winner of the election. Bravo, then, to its author, the former journalist Michael Gerson, and to Bush himself for recognizing its merits and protecting it from the "improvements" that were no doubt suggested by other members of his staff. ("It's gotta mention missile defense! It's gotta say the words 'compassionate conservatism'! That was the theme of the whole campaign!")

The dissonance began one day later. The new President's first act was an act of cruelty. He ordered an end to federal assistance to overseas organizations, such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation, that, in his words, use taxpayer funds "to pay for abortions or advocate or actively promote abortion." These organizations do no such thing, of course; nor, by law, can they. The federal money they receive is used for family planning—that is, to prevent unwanted pregnancies (and therefore to reduce the occasions for ending them). Nor do

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

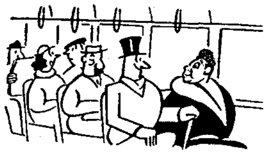
these groups promote or advocate abortion, though the clinics they operate sometimes use private funds to provide abortion counselling and services. Bush's order is calculated to placate his pro-life supporters, while avoiding the political storm that would ensue if similar restrictions were imposed at home. (The underlying logic—that public money "frees up" funds that might otherwise be devoted to purposes of which some taxpayers disapprove—is not likely to deter the Administration's plans for aid to "faith-based" organizations.) "Where there is suffering, there is duty" were among Bush's inaugural words. His inaugural act will increase suffering by shirking duty.

The President spent the rest of the week promoting his proposals for improving education and for a hugely regressive tax cut. The former was the subject of some of his speech's finest passages, the latter of its one descent into grossness: a pledge, high-fived by the crowd on the Mall, to "reduce taxes, to recover the momentum of our economy and reward the effort and enterprise of working Americans." Bush's "education package" is expected to amount to some ten billion dollars a year. Meanwhile, his income-tax cut would confer more than thirty billion dollars a year on the richest one per cent. His abolition of the estate tax would funnel another thirty billion a year to the well-off. Nearly half of that would go to an average of twenty-four hundred families a year. The economics columnist Matt Miller has calculated that each of these sets of heirs would get an average windfall of $6.2 million—a reward not for effort, enterprise, or work but simply for having been, like Bush himself, born rich.

This, so far, is the context of the Inaugural Address, and where speeches of this kind are concerned context is all. "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," F.D.R. said, on March 4, 1933. But, if his programmatic response to the Great Depression had been limited to making psychotherapy tax-deductible for anxious stockbrokers, that great line would be little remembered. What President Bush does, not what he says, will determine whether his speech ultimately redounds to his credit, or only to Michael Gerson's.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

INAUGURAL POSTCARD ON THE BUS



A couple of Saturdays ago, lacking any better invitation, you might have got up at five-thirty and left your silk scarves and your cashmere coat in the closet, put on your beat-up Red Wings and several layers of old wool, and cabbed up to the Harlem State Office Building, on 125th Street, where twenty young Socialists, a shoal of fellow-travelling Fordham students, and two stray Barnard College seniors who'd been drinking all night at the Village Idiot were waiting for transportation to Washington. David Schmauch, a member of the Harlem branch of the International Socialist Organization, was in charge of the operation. Schmauch, who resembles a clean-shaven Kenneth Branagh, was wearing duck boots, a nylon parka, and a goofy stocking cap. He'd paid fifteen hundred dollars out of his own pocket for a pair of antique yellow school buses, and he had sold nowhere near fifteen hundred dollars' worth of tickets. One contingent of sympathizers, he said, had backed out when it learned that the buses had no bathrooms. You might have been tempted to sneer at this objection, at the bourgeois primness of it; but after your very slow bus, slowed further by rain and fog, had made a bathroom stop at every service area along the New Jersey Turnpike—each stop dilating into a cigarette break and an extended snack opportunity—you might have wished, yourself, for a motor coach with self-contained amenities.

On the other hand, the more time you'd sat on a warm, dry bus reading your fifty-cent copy of the *Socialist Worker*, the less time you'd have had to stand in the mud at Stanton Square, behind the Supreme Court, where the only shelters were the dope-scented porta-potties and the plastic-wrapped gazebo from which warmup speakers for the Reverend Al Sharpton were fishing for cheers in a sea of three or four thousand wet non-Republicans. Worse weather was imaginable: it could have been raining harder. If you'd lucked onto the slower bus and arrived very late, only your smaller fingers might have been frozen by the time Sharpton took charge of the mike and stirred you, against your will, with the brevity and force of his denunciations. There in the rain, among the wilting placards ("Hail to the Thief!" and "The People Have Spoken—All Five of Them") and the rain-beaded lenses of Bertolt Brecht eyewear, you might even have warmed to Sharpton's cheaper shots—his challenge to Dubya "to do more than get messy with Jesse," for example, or his calculated stuttering of "Clarence T-Tom-Thomas."

The crowd was all smiles as it formed a column and marched slowly up Maryland Avenue to surround the Supreme Court. If you'd been there, you might have been roused by the ceaseless chanting of "Racist, sexist, anti-gay, GEORGE BUSH, go away!" and "Hey, Dubya, what do you say—How many votes did you steal today?" even if you didn't actually believe that George Bush was a bigot or that he'd stolen any votes that day. Maybe, long ago, you felt similarly divided at high-school pep rallies. Maybe, although the cheerleaders in Washington wore dreads and leather pants and those burdensome-looking collections of buttons (those rosarylike skeins of explicit ideology), rather than letter sweaters and pleated skirts, you'd have once again found yourself simultaneously thrilled and repelled. But when the sidewalk surrounding the Supreme Court was fully occupied by drenched protesters, and the chant had shifted to a conga beat of "THIS is what dem-oc-racy looks-like, THAT is what hyp-oc-risy looks-like," with hundreds of wet arms pointing at the Court on every shout of "THAT," your irritation with the self-congratulation of the THIS might have been swept away by a sudden, overpowering resentment of the THAT: the marble courthouse that loomed, silent, unlighted, unresponsive, behind a line of cops in riot helmets. You might have been glad you came down here.

But then, as the line moved on, and you rounded the southeast corner of the Court, you might have had the deeply weird experience of seeing yourself seeing yourself. There, in the Florida House on the other side of Second Street, behind tall windows hung with patriotic bunting, were men and women waiting for the party to commence, wearing the kinds of suits and shoes that you'd left at home, eating the kinds of food that you'd eaten in restaurants almost every night the week before, drinking the eighty-proof kind of drink for which you were all of a sudden thirsting, and peering out with a mixture of curiosity and fear and satisfaction at the sodden line of marchers of which you were at least somewhat, if only for a moment, and yet not entirely reluctantly, a living part.

The trip back took seven hours. The young Socialists—a first-year schoolteacher, an installer for Verizon, a bartender who was formerly a soccer star at Brown, among others—compared cell phones, read Marx in abridgment, unanimously praised "Friends," and split, along strict gay-straight lines, over the merits of "Xena: Warrior Princess." Few pleasures compare with that of riding on a bus after dark, hours behind schedule, with people you violently agree with. But finally, inevitably, you get dumped back in the city. You may still be one version of yourself, the version from the bus, the younger and redder version, as long as you're waiting for the subway and riding home. Then you peel off the thermal layers, still damp, of the long day's costume, and you see a wholly different kind of costume hanging in your closet; and in the shower you're naked and alone.

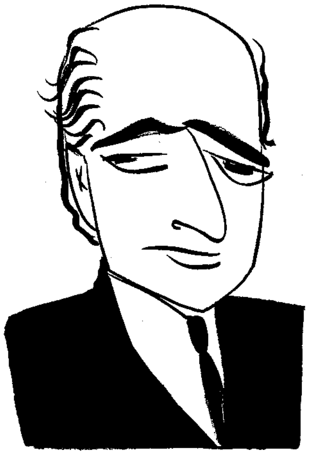
—*Jonathan Franzen*

PARDON ME

MARC RICH'S FRIEND IN THE BUSH WHITE HOUSE

There's a well-worn saying in politics that you should never stand between your enemy and a firing squad. This might help to explain the contented silence from the Bush White House on the subject of Bill Clinton's pardon of the billionaire fugitive commodities trader and tax evader Marc Rich. It's hard to imagine any opponent doing more damage to Clinton's reputation than he himself has done already by letting Rich off the hook.

But there may be another reason for the new Administration's restraint in the matter. It turns out that Lewis (Scooter) Libby, Vice-President Cheney's chief of staff, and assistant for national-security affairs, served off and on for eight years—until the election brought him into the Bush White House—as one of Rich's most aggressive lawyers. Libby argued on Rich's behalf before the U.S. Attorney's Office in 1987 and has been part of the team of lawyers representing him since then. Libby apparently tried to get a deal for Rich that would allow him to return to the United States without facing jail time. Prosecutors were unmoved by Libby's arguments, and have expressed outrage about the pardon.



Marc Rich

Does Libby support the pardon? Last week, he was not eager to say. A telephone call to him was returned by a colleague, Mary Matalin, the communications director for the Vice-President. "He was part of the team that represented Rich, but I don't think he wants to talk about the particulars of the case," she said. "We're moving forward, not looking back."

Some Democrats have been less reluctant to comment. "This is a real dangerous pardon," former Senator Bob Kerrey said by telephone. "You don't pardon a traitor who has paid no price at all. Something got in the way of good judgment."

That something may have been Rich's former wife, Denise Rich, a flamboyant New York socialite and pop songwriter who has become a force in the Democratic Party by throwing elaborate fund-raisers in her Fifth Avenue penthouse (one event featured a glassblower and a mentalist) and contributing more than a million dollars to the Clintons and other Democrats. Rich was introduced to the Clintons in 1992 by Kathy Sloane, the Manhattan real-estate agent who later sold them their house in Chappaqua. (It was also Sloane who takes credit for bringing into the first couple's circle the generous Clinton donor Walter Kaye, who in 1995 recommended that the White House hire an intern named Monica Lewinsky.) Although many people have assumed that Denise Rich cultivated the Clintons in order to help her husband, one of her friends offered a different explanation: back in 1992, the Riches were in the midst of a messy divorce, and Denise Rich was hoping to use her new White House connections, the friend says, to intimidate her husband.

Rich's lawyers—and there are a lot of them—dispute virtually every aspect of the case against him. What is not in dispute is that Rich amassed a fortune partly by exploiting regulatory loopholes while trading oil and other commodities to pariah states, including Iran at the height of the American hostage crisis and South Africa under apartheid. In 1983, when prosecutors were on the verge of pressing criminal charges against Rich and his partner Pincus (Pinky) Green, accusing them of engaging in the biggest tax-evasion scheme in U.S. history, Rich and Green fled to Switzerland. (The following year, their company pleaded guilty to multiple counts of tax evasion and paid more than two hundred million dollars in fines.)

In his quest for a pardon, Rich had more than one prominent Republican on his side. In addition to Scooter Libby, he hired Leonard Garment, the former White House counsel in the Nixon Administration, as one of his lawyers. "I don't know why he did it, but I think Clinton did the right thing," Garment told me.

Garment contends that the case was unfair, and that, after seventeen years in exile, Rich, who is reported to be worth more than a billion dollars, "has suffered enough"—confined, as he was, to a villa in Zug, with his Impressionist paintings, his private security detail, and his new wife.

"Of course Leonard would say that—he was paid good money to," Martin Auerbach, a former assistant U.S. Attorney, who helped prosecute Rich, said last week. Auerbach is particularly bothered by the role played by Jack Quinn, a former Clinton White House counsel and another of Rich's lawyers, in shortcircuiting the usual review process as he persuaded Clinton to grant the pardon.

Privately, some people close to Clinton blame Quinn, too. "I believe Jack sold him a bill of goods," one Clinton friend said. "He was so busy, and it was so crazy in the last days in the White House, I don't think he was adequately warned." According to Quinn, Clinton feels that the public doesn't understand the facts. "All he told me was that we have to get the facts out," Quinn said. "He believes in the merits of the case, and so do I."

Surveying the situation, Republican Senator John McCain has tried to find a worthwhile lesson. "It's the most graphic example of why we need campaign-finance reform," he said last week. "Maybe the President had the purest of motives for the pardon, but the appearance here is devastating. It's so clear and so pervasive: money buys access, and access is influence. Everybody knows that."

—*Jane Mayer*

DEPT. OF HOT STREAKS

A TEMPTING MAN

Jim Sperber watched the first episode of "Temptation Island" in the company of about two dozen old Upper East Side buddies, in a Tribeca loft. To quench his mounting anxiety, he gulped down several Screwdrivers, then stood quietly off to the side. About halfway through the show, his moment came: he saw himself appear onscreen, shirtless, in a pair of cutoff hemp shorts, and announce, "My name's Jim. I'm from New York City, and I'm a struggling artist and author." His friends whooped. They were in the presence of a reality-TV star.

"Temptation Island" is the series on Fox in which four unmarried couples spend two weeks apart on a tropical island resisting (or not) the advances of thirteen single women and thirteen single men. Unlike "Survivor," it has no winner. The prize is airtime and whatever measure of reality-TV fame you can squeeze out of it. Sperber is one of the single men—one of the tempters. As of the third episode, last week (the show was taped in September), his role was still a minor one, but his near-invisibility hasn't seemed to matter. From the moment the show began, three weeks ago, Jim Sperber has been on a roll, his life a surreal series of serendipitous evenings.

"Because of the show, I'm exuding confidence, and women love confidence," Sperber said the other day. He was in his apartment, a small one-bedroom on the sixth floor of a Sullivan Street walkup. It doubles as an art studio; on the wall was an unfinished painting—a panel of black and white squiggly lines. He was handsome enough, trim and a little wild-eyed. He was packing for a trip later that day to the Sundance Film Festival, in Utah, where he hoped to parlay his burst of fame into a movie deal, or something. "I'm poised," he said.

The night after the first episode aired, he was out with friends at Balthazar, the SoHo brasserie. One of them told a lovely young woman at the bar that Sperber was a star of the hit series "Temptation Island." That impressed her. The next night, she showed up at his apartment in a rabbit-fur bustier and a low-slung belt. That impressed him. Later that evening, the two found themselves at Sway, the night club, squeezed into a banquette with Benicio Del Toro, the actor, and Moby, the recording artist. Then there was another night at Balthazar, during which Sperber wound up talking to Matthew McConaughey, the actor. They got into an argument about the ethical implications of "Temptation Island." "McConaughey's very moralistic," Sperber said. "He was against it. But I made my point. I said, 'Listen, the fact is, the show can potentially help people in this country, where our divorce rate is fifty per cent. To get people talking about fidelity and relationships is not a bad thing.' That's where I had McConaughey. He was, like, 'I see your point there.' "

As Sperber packed for Utah he loaded a stack of freshly washed boxer shorts directly from his old prep-school laundry bag into his suitcase. Among his effects was the manuscript of a book that he's trying to sell. It is a memoir of his life as an adopted child—an assemblage, basically, of old report cards, letters, and journal entries. If you thumb through it, you'll learn that he was raised on the Upper East Side, with summers in Quogue; that he was educated at Buckley, Brooks, Colgate, and Cal Arts; that his adoptive father, a retired banker, disapproved of his decision to pursue an art career; and that his birth mother, whom he tracked down last year, told him that he was conceived during a one-night stand on a Caribbean island. The memoir, entitled "Cradle," ends with him informing her of his plans to go on "Temptation Island."

At thirty-two, he's the show's oldest tempter. He said that he had originally hoped to get on "Survivor II," but when "Temptation" came along he couldn't resist, despite some initial trepidation. "It's not always the coolest thing, trying to pick up chicks on television," he said. "Making coffee, backstabbing people, doing whatever you do on 'Survivor'—that's a whole different bag."

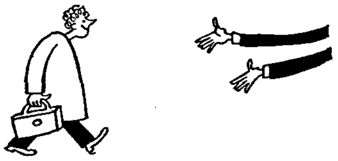
His experience on the island—which he is not allowed to talk about, lest he incur a five-million-dollar fine from Fox TV—has made picking up chicks off camera much easier. "Now I have absolutely no fear of talking to women, even women totally out of my league—like S." Oh yes, S. He met S. the other night at Ten's, the gentlemen's club. She was, in his opinion, the best-looking dancer there. His friend mentioned "Temptation Island," and S. decided to stick around for a drink. Sperber and the stripper's second date involved watching the second episode of "Temptation Island" at a party in a suite at the W Hotel. After the party, they hit the clubs: Lotus and Halo. By the end of the night, he was smitten.

"I really am falling for this girl," he said as he packed a pair of ski goggles. (He intended to go snowboarding in Utah.) "Now that I'm at this high point, it's the perfect time to fall in love. I just hope I'm not being used."

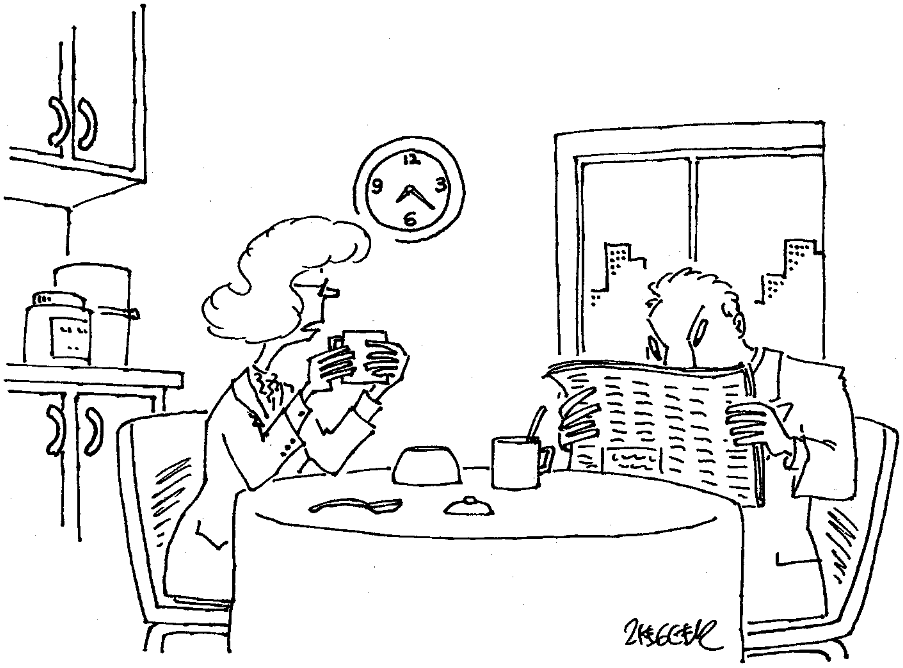
—*Nick Paumgarten*

OLD HOME WEEK

VISITING THE DECLARATION



Having witnessed fourteen Presidential Inaugurations in the flesh and having been deeply impressed by the words of Justice John Paul Stevens in Bush v. Gore ("We may never know with complete certainty the identity of the winner of this year's Presidential election"), I decided to stay put during Inaugural week, right here in Fun City. After all, the first President took the oath of office on the corner of Wall and Nassau Streets, on the site of what is now Federal Hall. Down I went a few days before the official ceremony in Washington. Federal Hall is a splendid Greek Revival building (the original building is long since gone), with eight Doric columns and excessively steep steps, the whole dominated by an enormous statue of George Washington. Inside the quiet vaulted hall, I learned from numerous exhibits and pamphlets that Washington took the oath wearing a suit of brown homespun made in Connecticut. He had been unanimously elected—no fuss, no feathers, no chads. According to an eyewitness, "It was a very touching scene and quite of the solemn kind. His aspect grave, almost to sadness, his modesty, actually shaking, his voice deep, a little tremulous, and so low as to call for close attention." On exhibit, too, was a piece of iron railing believed to be from the balcony on which Washington took the solemn oath, a lovely curlicued, flowery bit of iron, almost poetic in the freedom of its design.



"Is it your intention to seethe for the next four years?"

• •

On Saturday morning, Inauguration Day, I paid a call on an old friend, Mimi Bowling, curator of the Manuscripts and Archives Division of the New York Public Library, at Forty-second Street. Ms. Bowling, who is soft-spoken, efficient, and witty, and a fount of historical knowledge, had the singular honor of escorting an original copy of the Declaration of Independence in Thomas Jefferson's own hand to Paris last spring to be exhibited in the Bibliothèque Nationale. What better day than this to talk about her journey? "The document is, of course, one of the library's greatest treasures," Ms. Bowling said. "At the moment, it is on display on the ground floor in our Utopia exhibit. We know that Jefferson wrote out five copies of the Declaration between July 4 and July 10, 1776. He was infuriated when South Carolina and Georgia excised some passages condemning slavery. He called it 'mutilation.' Our copy came to the library in 1896, the gift of John Stewart Kennedy, one of the library's first trustees. When not on display, the document is kept in a secret spot that is *never* disclosed. During the Second World War, it was shipped to vaults of the Guarantee Trust Company in Saratoga Springs"—the idea, presumably, being that the Germans would not bomb a racetrack and a spa.

Ms. Bowling paused. "The document, as far as we know, had never left the country until I took it to Paris last March, flying Delta, accompanied to the plane by two guards, the Declaration in a big, nondescript suitcase. The Declaration had a window seat and was securely strapped in. We did not inform the crew that the Declaration was aboard, but they had a hint that something special *was* going on. They didn't push me on this—they were very discreet. In Paris, I was met by an installer in a four-wheel-drive, and off went the Declaration. It had never left my side, and we had had an easy trip. But the trip back, three months later! A nightmare. White knuckles all the way home. It had been stored overnight in an undisclosed place, and then when we went there to pick it up and started out for Charles de Gaulle we ran into total gridlock—nothing moved, sanitation trucks on every block, I was sure we would miss the plane. At Charles de Gaulle, I had to run, with the Declaration on a luggage cart behind me, through mobs of swirling African chiefs and flowing robes and fancy headgear, from one building to another, had to talk my way out of interminable lines while people adjusted value-added taxes, and parried with customs people who wanted to open everything and repack everything. Me, the Declaration, and an escort boarded the plane just as the door slammed shut and the plane took off. Once again, the Declaration had the good view, a securely strapped window seat. A nosy woman wanted that seat for a friend. 'Your travelling companion is very quiet,' she said. 'Madam,' I said, 'he is very old.'

"I feel deeply honored to have slept with Thomas Jefferson on the way back," Ms. Bowling said, without blushing, "and to have returned him to Paris where he had been our ambassador." She handed me a framed document: part of Washington's farewell address on leaving the Presidency, written in his own hand. Simply holding it humbled me. I made out the words "Friends & Fellow Citizens." "Washington urged resources in education," Ms. Bowling said. I handed her back the words of the first President of the United States and went home to listen to the words of the forty-third, sworn in under stormy skies.

—*Philip Hamburger*

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PERSONAL HISTORY

BUSTED IN NEW YORK

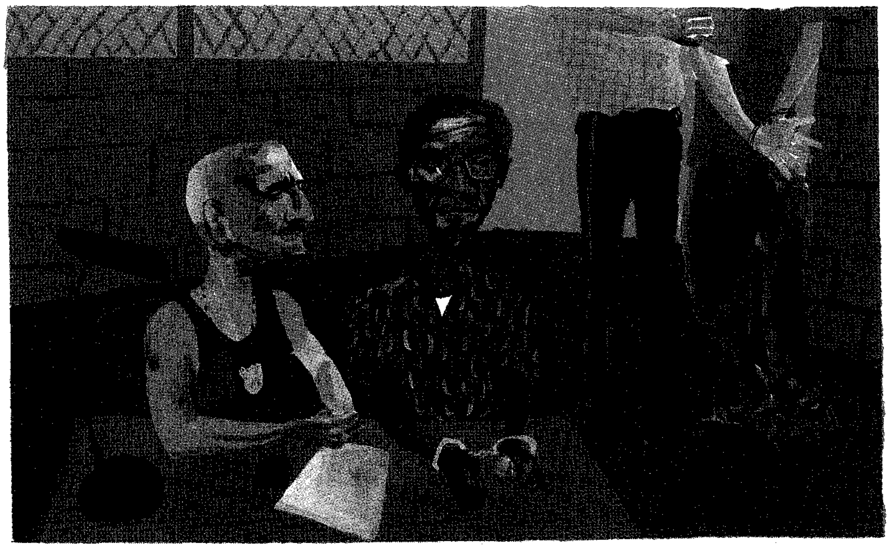
A nighttime walk leads to trouble.

BY DARRYL PINCKNEY

How long had it been since I'd been out late on the Lower East Side? Back in the New Wave bohemian days of the late nineteen-seventies and early eighties, the Lower East Side was the capital of mischief. The low life was still literary. I could be persuaded to go anywhere in search of an authentic urban experience. But then my friends grew up, and I moved far away, as Europe seemed to me at the time. Because I don't drink and run wild anymore, because I now live down a dirt track in the English countryside, a Manhattan roomful of the young and the smooth can be intimidating.

But the reggae club the summer before last was known as a chill lounge. Rona let her hair hang over the beat. We were waiting for Billie. I was telling myself not to have a hard time waiting. I was looking forward to my session with that inner-child finder, marijuana. The reggae swelled around me. My head bobbed like a duck's when there's bread on the water. I saw what looked like a ballet dancer's leg. Billie, and a Billie who knew the score. Her opening drink would not take long. We were going to step outside. We couldn't smoke pot in this reggae club. Not even in a reggae club? That's how long it had been since I'd been out late on the Lower East Side.

Street lamps threw a spotlight over pedestrians crossing Second Avenue. Killer taxis left unpleasant gusts. I leaned into the summer heat. Soon we three were alone in the dark of Sixth Street. Rona checked behind her. Then, like backup singers on the downbeat, Billie and I snapped glances over our right shoulders. Maybe some people wouldn't have bothered, but we were pros. We were veterans of the streets. Rona fired one up, and passed it. We were chatting. I hogged it. We were drifting toward midnight. Billie handed it back to Rona. Three shapes in front of a doorway decided to heckle us. "You're having a good time." They sounded like unappetizing old kids. We moved to the curb. "We know what you're doing." Rona pushed her hand against the air to let them know that the joke, whatever it was, had to stop. "Smoke it." We shook our heads at their being so boisterous when they were maybe getting high



He said he would try to tell me what was going to happen. I thought I understood.

R. GREGORY CHRISTIE

themselves, and in a doorway, of all places. We should have looked ahead instead of behind.

We saw the corner and we saw the big man in white-guy plaid shorts cutting a pigeon-toed diagonal from across the street. Everything about him was aimed toward us. His bright white sneakers continued to rise and fall in our direction. A huge meatpacking arm was held out to us, and a big voice was coming at us, too. His other arm came out of his undershirt with a square of ID. We had to keep moving toward him, like something swirling down a drain. There now seemed to be enough light for a film crew's night shoot. How could we have missed the blue unmarked van parked on the other side of Sixth Street?

"Been smoking something?" No answer. "Put your hands flat on the trunk of this car." The women, my friends, were side by side at the back of the car. I was on the sidewalk and had to bend over. Other undercovers quickly appeared. "We're going to empty your pockets." A woman had taken up position behind Rona and Billie. I felt a hand go into my pocket. My total financial assets held by a faded money clip hit the trunk of the car. "Did you all just meet tonight?" a new voice demanded. "No." My own voice was thin and completely lacking in the authority of outrage. The money clip was followed by a pack of menthol cigarettes, a disposable lighter, a case containing reading glasses, a John Coltrane–Johnny Hartman CD—"You listen to some good music," a head of hair said—and a mobile phone. "Where's your beeper?" He patted me down. "You got a beeper?" "No," came the thin reply.

The detectives murmured. They'd found the smallest stub of weed in a matchbook in Rona's pocket. The woman detective left. The detective with the hair asked the ladies to step over to the sidewalk. Where Plaid Shorts had, like me, the beginnings of his father's stomach, this one had pecs and biceps rolling out of a magenta tank top. He looked like a television actor in the role of maverick cop. The rest of him was in the suburban version of casual: crisp bluejeans and clean sneakers.

"So you guys just met tonight?" Tank Top asked. It was my turn. He was going to compare answers. Plaid Shorts said he was going over to the van to check something. "How do you know each other?" Tank Top demanded. "School." If he identified us as middle class, wouldn't he have to watch himself? Maybe I was trying to prick some white blue-collar resentment; anything to turn the tables a little. When he asked about my beeper, I thought maybe he hoped he'd interrupted something good, criminally speaking, such as a black dude giving two white chicks a taste of the street herb they were about to buy or get ripped off for. But if he saw that we were O.K., then the paperwork on the citation that they gave out in these cases would speed up. One black guy with gray in his beard and one and a half white girls, not two, because by that time they must have figured out that Billie's honey skin and the Asian cast to her eyes and her Church of England accent were some weird Caribbean story. Yes, Officer, I wanted to explain, the one with the henna highlights is a famous Jewish scientist, the daughter of the British Commonwealth is a banker, and I'm a black guy who needs two pairs of glasses and won't be on your computer lists, not even a credit rating.

Billie and Rona had shown no emotion until Plaid Shorts brought the handcuffs. Then they gave out soft, pastel exclamations. Plaid Shorts led them, affronted and vulnerable, across the street to the side door of the van. I thought, Rona's daughter walks just like her. I felt my watch being removed. Tank Top put my arms behind me and pushed my hands high up my back. I felt the metal around my wrists. I thought of my parents and how they would hurl themselves into this if they found out. I felt and heard the handcuffs lock. I thought of my parents and their lawsuits. Back in the good old days, they'd sued our home-town police department to force it to desegregate, and when that worked they sued the fire department—things they did in their spare time, as good citizens, as blacks of their generation, members of the N.A.A.C.P. rank and file. Injustice had only to ring their doorbell, and they were off to the poorhouse. And here was frivolous me letting a white man put me in handcuffs for something other than protest. I remembered what my father had said to my tears at my sis-

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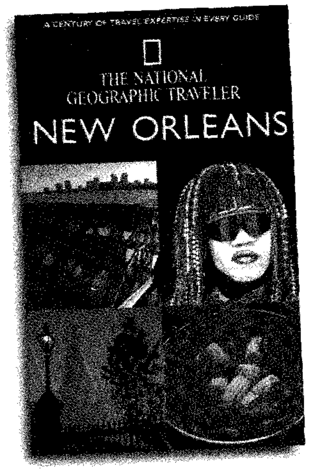
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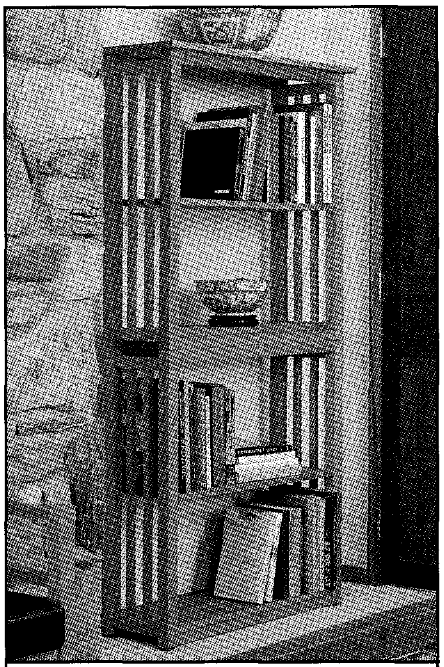

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ter's memorial, the year before: Keep it together.

But I was in shock. "I'm going to be sick." I was starting to list from side to side. "Have you been drinking?" "No." I was going deaf. "I'm going to pass out." Tank Top gripped me just below my right armpit, and we started off, but my feet waited before they followed my legs. The world broke into silent, colorful particles. I got to the door and fell flat into the van. Rona's face floated. I began to hear her. I concentrated on finding her face in one place, something I could get up for and move toward, even if only on my knees. "Don't hurt him," Rona and Billie called. "I'm trying to help him," Tank Top countered.

Keep it together, I chanted to myself. Not because I was a black man in handcuffs in front of two white guys; not because I was powerless, which made it all the more necessary at least to imitate the examples of dignity in confrontations with police which I'd witnessed; and not because I was a grown man losing it in front of two women who, though in handcuffs, were trying to defend me. But because they were my friends. They were the ones with children at home. I crawled over to my friends in the seatless, windowless rear of the van, dripping sweat on them.

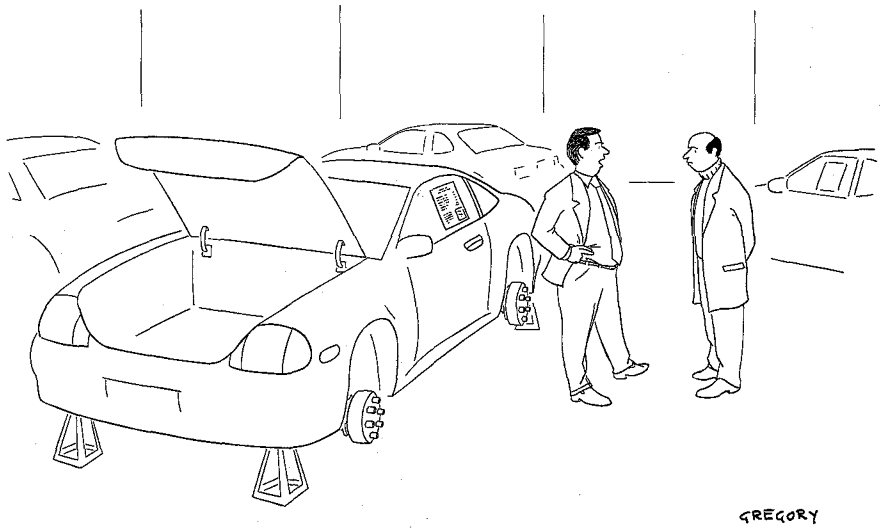
Plaid Shorts yanked the van into the street. Because we couldn't grab, and there was nothing to grab on to, we rolled into Alice-down-the-rabbit-hole positions, and rolled again when Plaid Shorts hit the gas. "This is such bullshit," Billie said to the ceiling. "This sucks," Plaid Shorts said. But he wasn't talking to us. He looked across to Tank Top. "You got that right." "A big one," Plaid Shorts added. "Hate it," Tank Top said to his window. "Total bullshit." Rona had dusted off her repertoire of apt facial expressions. This one said, "Are these guys for real?" "Five more years, man, and then I'm out," Plaid Shorts said. "I can't wait to just do my band." He did a near wheelie around a corner. We shouldered back up into sitting positions pretty expertly after two corners. Tank Top took some gum from the dashboard and said he had to keep at this bullshit until he could pay off his wife. He told Plaid Shorts that instead of alimony he was offering his wife a once-in-a-lifetime, can't-refuse lump sum. "It's like a buyout."

The acid-driven power chords of Pink Floyd took over the van. Rona's expression said, "These guys are too much." "They're wild," Billie's eyes said back as she looked for the place behind her where the music was blaring from. Maybe the detectives were trying to tell us something. Not that they were nice guys who regrettably had to do their job but that they were better than the job they'd been reduced to doing, and that they, too, had aspirations. The Rolling Stones came on next, and Plaid Shorts sang along. The music was perhaps meant to say that they weren't uncool, redneck cops having a blast at the expense of the liberal, the black, and the in-between.

I was too ashamed to be sympathetic. Being addressed as "sir" by Tank Top only after I had shown weakness and fear—that was humiliating. A cop could go off at any time. I'd thought of that and had been afraid, and there was no way to take it back. And for what had I lost my self-respect? For an offense the detectives thought beneath their training. What did you do last night? Oh, I was picked up for a reefer and I fainted like a man. The van went up one street and down another. We couldn't see much, but most likely we were driving around and around as various undercover operations didn't work out. On one dark corner we waited so long in the van by ourselves that we almost slept.

The van door slid open, and in the shaft of light Tank Top was helping a Hispanic woman, maybe in her fifties, climb aboard the bummer bus. "Hey, Officer," she said when we were under way. "My hands too hot." The detectives parked and helped Rona and Billie out. Tank Top said, "I'm going to loosen these tight cuffs, like you asked." Then he turned off the lights, slammed the door, and left me with this woman who made unsavory sounds in the dark. I thought she was trying to ditch her vials of crack and the detectives would then claim that they were mine. I went over on my side, practicing the I-was-asleep defense. They put Rona and Billie back in the van, turned on the lights, drove off, stopped again, and got out by themselves. As soon as the doors closed, the Hispanic woman, who'd freed her hands, whipped out a big bag of heroin, snorted it on her knee, and deftly worked her hands back into the cuffs. Rona was laughing in disbelief. Quietly, the Hispanic woman zoned sidewise. The detectives, when they got back in, firmly looked straight ahead.

The next time the van door opened, a Hispanic man, maybe also in his fifties, climbed in. A dark Rasta youth was pushed in after him. "Ooh," the Hispanic guy said, and tried to shift himself. He nodded greetings of solidarity. What he'd been oohing about hit Rona's hygiene radar first. It made delicate Billie draw in her legs. The gleaming Rasta youth sprawled before us had matted dreadlocks that looked like what comes



"Wheels and an engine? Now you're talking sports package."

from the back of a furnace when its filter is changed. Maybe I should have thought harder about this being someone's son, but the stench was overpowering. Meanwhile, he kept up a stream of Babylon raas claat denunciations of the police. He shouted curses on the white man. I thought, Rasta, my brother in Garvey, you are on your own. The detectives paid him no mind. They'd made their quota for the shift.

We'd been smoking a joint right around the corner from the local precinct house, that's how hip we were. The detectives took us inside and the handcuffs came off. After three hours, it was a relief to see my fingers. Tank Top took me and the Rasta youth upstairs to a grotty corridor, and the strip search began. He made the Rasta youth wait in the shadows at the end. He ordered me to hand him my clothes item by item. I was to turn around, bend over, and drop my shorts. He said quickly that that was enough. I was to take off my socks and turn them inside out. "Get dressed." He asked if I'd ever been arrested. No. He said he would try to tell me what was going to happen. I thought I understood. He motioned to the Rasta and sent me downstairs. He and the Rasta followed moments later. Tank Top had returned my property, except for the phone and the CD. Such stuff had to go over to the lockup at Central, he explained. If that was the case, then the Rasta youth had a prayer shawl and a Torah for Central to deal with. Tank Top tried to talk when he took my fingerprints. "So what kind of things do you write?" After that, he had paperwork to finish. Now and then, he would dial a telephone number, mutter, hang up, and shrug. A clock kept vigil over a wall of "Most Wanted" leaflets.

When Plaid Shorts announced that we were moving, around five o'clock in the morning, the Hispanic man asked how much money I had on me. I'd covered the money clip with my hand when Tank Top passed it to me, but, clearly, I hadn't been quick enough. The Hispanic man said I couldn't bring in anything where we were going, because it would get taken off me. He informed Plaid Shorts, who agreed that I'd get robbed. Rona put my belongings, even my glasses, in her pocket. My property would be safer in the women's section, the Hispanic man advised as we were put back into handcuffs and then linked to one another. I was made to lead our daisy chain of handcuffs through the precinct's main room. As Plaid Shorts increased the pace, two officers by the front door erupted into grunting song. "Working on the chain gang, uh."

We hopped out of the van into a street that was still dark. A semicircle of light waited for us to approach. This was the Tombs, that place I'd heard about, read about. Two more daisy chains of prisoners joined ours as Tank Top, having rung twice, banged on the metal grating over the entrance. It rolled up. Plaid Shorts and Tank Top surrendered us in a series of rapid clipboard signatures. When I realized that they intended to abandon us at this concrete threshold, I wanted to ask them when they planned to read us our rights. I'd begun to think of them as our undercovers. They were responsible for us. But they were gone, and we were across the line, and the metal grating was coming down.

I followed a black female corrections officer's rump up some stairs. A black male corrections officer unhooked everybody. My eyes stayed on Rona and Billie when they were ordered to move to the other side of the corridor. The women went in one direction, the men in another. Green bars streamed along either side of me as I hurried both to keep up with the corrections officer who was now taking us down to the basement and to keep ahead of someone whose footsteps menaced my heels.

The Rasta youth and I were directed into the last cell of the long jail. I insinuated myself onto the narrow metal bench that went from the bars of the cell to the rear wall, where it made a right angle toward the partition that hid the toilet. Nine mute, tired faces emphasized how cramped and stuffy the tiny cell was. One man was curled up asleep under the bench.

I didn't want to look too intently at the other men in judicial storage, in case to do so meant something I could not handle the consequences of. I also didn't want to look away too quickly when my gaze happened to meet someone else's. However, no one was interested in hassling

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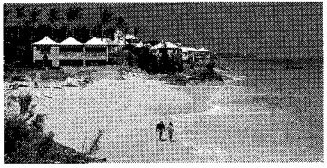

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3B
HAPPY BIRTHDAY

"I'm not giving up the present till I see the party bag."

• •

the new arrivals. Men were waking up, and their banter competed with the locker-room-type noise coming from the corrections officers' oblong station desk. A short white girl with thick glasses and a rolling lectern called my name. She said the interview was to determine who was eligible for bail, but the questions also separated the wheat from the chaff, socioeconomically speaking. Some guys probably had no job, no taxable weekly income, no address, no mother's address. She lost patience with the Rasta youth's decent background. "Education? How far did you get in school?" A community-college degree. Her head was tilted up toward the spectacle of his hair. "We'll say grade fifteen."

Some time later, the Rasta youth and I were summoned again. But again we were going only a few yards. A black corrections officer shooed aside someone blocking the door of the new cell, which was large and, sneaked glances told me, held some huge dudes. Fresh apprehension was bringing my body to something like exocrine parity with the Rasta youth's. I didn't know what to expect, and so tried to prepare for the worst. We were shoulder to shoulder on a metal bench, like crows shuffling on a telephone wire. The move to this restless population had to be the final, dangerous descent, the reason I'd crammed my watch into my glasses case and handed everything off to Rona.

A black youth with his hair in tight break braids called out to a new arrival, my Hispanic comrade. "Come on in." The black youth's knuckles looked as big as Mike Tyson's. "They took the murderers out early." He slapped five with a couple of his hulking neighbors and concerned himself with what he could see of his reflection in the metal bench between his thighs. He said something more. I didn't hear what it was, but it must have been wicked.

A black corrections officer reversed himself and glared through the green bars. "What?" "Nothing, Mo," the black youth said loudly, evenly. Only one of his neighbors giggled. "Say what, chump?" He was going for the keys at his hip. "You say something?" He was so agitated that he couldn't get the key in. He was as tall as a basketball power forward. Everything he said was a variation of "You want to say something?" The cell door flew open, and in a few steps the corrections officer was over the massive head of twinkling break braids. "A real man would say something now." He waited for an answer. I could see him shaking. The black youth wasn't going to feed him any lines or provocation. The corrections officer pivoted toward the door. He had a baton on his belt, but no gun. He made a satisfied noise with his keys.

It was not an impressive performance. I knew that. The corrections officer hadn't come up with any good lines. He just kept repeating himself. I could tell that all twenty-four of my cellmates were thinking how off the hook the corrections officer had been to raise up—the lingo was coming to me—on somebody like that. I was getting excited, feeling that I was on the verge of bonding with the other guys in our high and hip judgment against the corrections officer. He didn't meet our rigorous standards when it came to "reading" someone in the street manner. The black youth with the oiled, sparkling braids delivered our verdict: "Definitely bugging behind something."

The black corrections officer flung the metal door so hard it bounced against the cell bars and rode back some. Giant steps put him in a place that blocked my view of the black youth. Spit was dancing from his head, pinwheel fashion, as he roared, "If I started to kick your black ass now, where would your black ass be next week?" I couldn't remember when I'd seen such sudden rage. It stopped all other activity in the basement. The tendons in his neck were ready to explode. I couldn't begin to think what his nostrils might be doing. Maybe our survival molecules were not the only ones to have been put on alert. Some of his colleagues had come by to monitor the situation. They turned back in a way that indicated they'd respect some code not to interfere. The cell was very still as the corrections officer made his exit. The street judgment was in the silence. Nobody wanted to look at him until he'd turned the lock. He'd made his point. He'd shown how dangerous was his longing to have a reason to lose control.

The corrections officer's brown skin looked glazed, as though it had been fired in a kiln. He didn't seem to know how to finish his scene and stood wheezing by the bars. I almost thought he was going to mellow into the dispersal-of-balm-and-poultice phase of tough love. The mask of the shock-tactics practitioner would drop. He'd apologize, give advice, tell the young brothers how he was once on his way to being where they were. The black corrections officer said, "Remember. I'll be going home at four o'clock. You'll still be here. You're in jail. I'm not." Maybe I should have taken into account the possibility that he had seen and had a lot of trouble doing his job. Maybe he and the black youth already had a story going and I'd missed what started it. But that didn't matter. Only what he'd said about four o'clock mattered. It wasn't even nine o'clock in the morning yet. My Hispanic comrade was looking at me. He took his eyes heavenward and clasped his hands. Then he shot me an inaudible laugh.

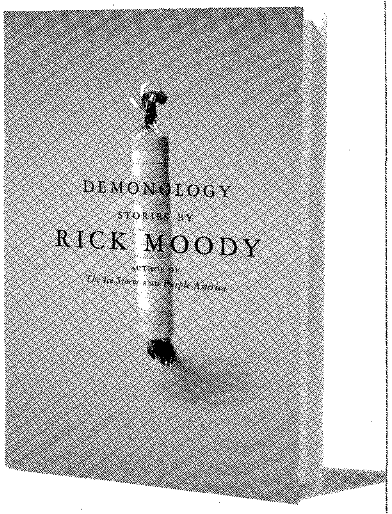
Jail was going to get me over my fear of saying the obvious, because there was no way to ignore all morning the fact that everyone in the cell was either black or Hispanic. The irony, for me, was that an all-black gathering usually meant a special event, a stirring occasion. I thought back to some black guys I used to know who enjoyed telling me that black guys like me ought to hang out with black groups like theirs. It flattered me to believe that I flattered them with my yearning for instruction in the art of how to be down with it. But this was not what they had in mind. The mood in the cell was like that of an emergency room in a city hospital: a mixture of squalor, panic, boredom, and resentment at the supposed randomness of bad luck.

Some guys, the Rasta youth among them, had elected to slip down onto the concrete floor. They were opting out of consciousness. Our cell had no television, no radio, no newspapers. There was a water fountain, a disgusting toilet, and two pay phones from which collect calls could be made. I don't know how those guys knew when the corrections officers had their backs turned, or how they'd held on to the contraband of drugs and matches they'd been thoroughly searched for, or how they knew who in which cell had what, but at one moment, as if by secret signal, paraphernalia went flying through green bars from cell to cell. The next thing I knew, guys were taking turns smoking crack behind the waist-high partition of the raised open toilet of our cell. Right there in the Tombs. I guess they figured there was no chance of the crack outsmelling the toilet. I'd switched seats and, as a result, was too near the burning funk. I saw my Hispanic comrade casually walk away from the hot spot, and soon I, too, got up and crossed the cell. His look of approval after I'd eased in somewhere else told me that I'd made the right move.

A black guy with broken teeth, dressed in a torn car coat, emerged from behind the toilet. He ambled around and then seized the floor. "You remember Lucky Lou Diamond? I had twenty thousand dollar over to Jersey City." I tuned in, eager for a jailhouse Richard Pryor who could turn the cell into something else. "Nineteen-seventy-five? Bunny hat on my head? Your Honor. There's no mouth on the girl he touched." His free association promised much, but it gutter-balled into such incoherence that the black youth with break braids spoke for everyone when he barked, "Sit down."

It was quiet for a while, but then the Rasta youth snapped to attention. Something jerked him to his feet and set him standing squarely in front of the cell door, his right knee pounding out a steady rhythm. I thought, Just when things were manageable, my brother in Selassie has to flip out. I braced myself for his rap. But he was ready for his lunch. He was first in the line we were commanded to make; first to march out of the cell toward stacks of chalk-colored squares on long, low trolleys that looked like what bricks are transported on at a building site. We were to pick up a sandwich, turn, take a plastic cup of grape juice from another low trolley, and then march back to the cell.

A black guy in an orange jumpsuit—a trusty—called after me to let me know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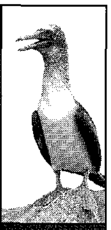
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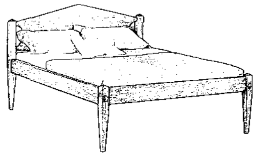
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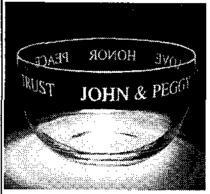
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that I'd missed my allotted sandwich. Something about being urged to march rendered me unable to lift anything other than a cup of juice. Very soon the cell was strewn with sandwich remnants. Leaking sachets of mustard and mayonnaise found their way under the bench. A wedge of cheese crowned one of the pay phones. Lunch added to the odors of incarceration. However, there was plenty of room, because some of the men whose size so alarmed me when I first entered the cell had dived to the floor. I counted nine guys asleep in the grime, six of them in the fetal position, their wrists between their knees. Heads had to loll down some broad shoulders before they could touch concrete. A young, crack-thin guy woke and, using his palms for locomotion, crawled along on his stomach to the trash can, where he reached up to extract sandwich remains.

I overheard some of the guys say a little while later that the police had arrested so many people in the sweep of the previous evening that two special night courts had been set up to process the haul. They would start to call names at four o'clock. Waiting might have been easier had there been no clock. At the appointed hour, the only official movement came from the black corrections officer who'd flipped out that morning. I'm sorry to report that he went through all the transparent maneuvers of rubbing it in. He paraded by us on his way back to the oblong station desk, ostensibly laughing at himself for forgetting something. And, just in case the black youth with break braids was pretending to take no notice of him, the corrections officer brought over a white officer holding a clipboard and pointed at the youth. His colleague tapped him a Have-a-good-night. "I told you when you got here not to give me problems." The black youth looked toward the bars at last, his arms hugging his chest. The black corrections officer flicked a salute.

"Yo, Pops," I heard the black youth say once the air had calmed down again around us. "Pops," he called again in my direction. I couldn't believe that he was talking to me. Pops? Everybody in the cell who spoke to someone he didn't know said, "Yo, G." I pointed to myself. Who, me? "Mind my asking what you're in for?" I made a smoking gesture with two fingers of my right hand. "Uh-huh. You dress Italian. But." A neighbor of his wanted to give him five for that observation, but he just looked at him hard. It was true. The soundtrack of brotherhood in my head was nearly all Marvin Gaye. It had finally happened: I was older than a cartoon father on television. I was older than Homer Simpson.

I wasn't sure if Old Four Eyes in the Robert Hayden poem fled to "danger in the safety zones" or to "safety in the danger zones." It was important to me, sitting there in my concrete elsewhere, which seemed dirtier and dimmer the longer I had to wait.

As the cell emptied, it got eerier. The few new guys, dressed in their garrulous night selves, were out of sympathy with the general tone of exhaustion and passivity. One new guy ranted about calling his girlfriend to tell her to hook up a plane to Canada, because after he made bail he was going to step off, boy. Another, the lone white, clung to a pay phone. He suggested to a friend that they deceive his brother-in-law. "Don't tell him it's for me." He could press telephone numbers with amazing speed. He insisted to the next friend that she had to get the bail money out of her mother, because he could not, he said, shooting his eyes across us, the non-white, do Rikers.

My name was called, the cell door gapped open, and I floated out. Neither my Hispanic comrade nor the Rasta youth followed. I regretted that I would not have the chance to thank the man who had watched my back. Very soon I found myself upstairs in a new cell that had an iron-lattice screen. Beyond it was the outside world. I heard the voices of what I supposed were women corrections officers, and then over the walls I heard Billie and Rona in their interview cells. They heard me, we heard one another. The public defender on the free persons' side of the barrier was a heavy-set white woman. She went from cubicle to cubicle, guiding us toward a plea: Adjournment in Contemplation of Dismissal, or A.C.D. If we didn't get picked

TO THE SOUL

Is anyone there
if so
are you real
either way are you
one or several
if the latter
are you all at once
or do you
take turns not answering

is your answer
the question itself
surviving the asking
without end
whose question is it
how does it begin
where does it come from
how did it ever
find out about you
over the sound
of itself
with nothing but its own
ignorance to go by

—*W. S. Merwin*

up for the same offense within a twelve-month period, then the charge would be dropped. A.C.D.

I told the P.D. that I'd used the pay phones. I knew that that afternoon a friend of mine had come zooming down with newspapers and a criminal lawyer and had been denied access. She said they were entitled to hold us for at least twenty-four hours before they had to do anything with us. I said that being in custody was the punishment. I said prosecution of so-called quality-of-life crimes was a form of harassment. She explained that under the circumstances they didn't have to read us our rights. I was about to compare such offenses to civil disobedience, but the last thing this calm and capable P.D. was interested in was anybody's vanity. She said that high arrest figures justified the large increase in the number of police on the streets. It was that simple.

In the courtroom, I felt as though we were guest speakers at a high school, the offenders with us behind the court recorder looked so tadpole, so young. We stood when the judge entered. "He's not that kind of judge," a black bailiff said. Maybe because I was minutes and a plea away from getting out, tenderness got the better of me. I thought of my older sister and her practice in defense of juvenile offenders valiantly conducted from files in shopping bags in the trunk of her car. Our case was called, and we sat some rows back from the attorneys' desks, where we were unable to hear the grim P.D., even if we could have concentrated enough.

God bless the old-hippie souls who still believed in public life and social responsibility, I thought, but the P.D. had no time for effusive thanks. I'd been so hypnotized by green bars that the marble floor outside the courtroom was dazzling. The white clerks behind the counter in a payment-and-records office were accustomed to a stressed-out public and were rude back. Down in the lobby, Rona and Billie ran for the door marked "Women." I rushed over to a rickety blue booth for my fix of those former slave crops—tobacco, sugar, coffee.

Perhaps our elation on Rona's rooftop was unearned, but we felt like released hostages. We made jokes as soon as we had an audience of friends. Even the squalid bits, when told the right way, got laughs. Maybe we were defending ourselves against our deeper reactions to what had happened to us. Rona's husband said that now that his little boy was old enough to play in the street he had had to tell him what to do should the police ever stop him. Don't move; do exactly what they say; take no chances; give no lip. We wondered how popular these sweeps would be after some more white people had been caught in the net.

We'd been abruptly deprived of our liberty, and that would always make for a chilling memory. And as I'd learned sitting in the cell with all those guys whose stories I didn't know and couldn't ask for: the system exists, the system—for the nonwhite young, the poor—is real. New arrest records had been created, but we were out, and friends were standing in wreaths of smoke, savoring the night view of fire escapes, water tanks, and lights in distant windows.

Six days after my release, I was back on the Lower East Side. I understood what Rona meant when she said that she fell in love with New York the day she realized that she could get a candy bar on every corner. But jail worked, it won. I thought, I'm not doing that again. The romance was over. For me, the changes in the streets went with everything else. Once upon a time, people moved to New York to become New Yorkers. Then people moved to New York and thought it perfectly O.K. to remain themselves. Goodbye, Frank O'Hara.

"Yo, Papi," I heard. I was astonished. It was my Hispanic comrade. They'd given him five days on Rikers Island for possession of a crack pipe. He was selling vinyl records on the sidewalk before he got moved off that bit of Second Avenue. Could I help him out? It would be my privilege. He said he remembered what the black youth with break braids had said when they took him out of that cell in the Tombs. "Kidnapped by the Mayor, y'all." ♦

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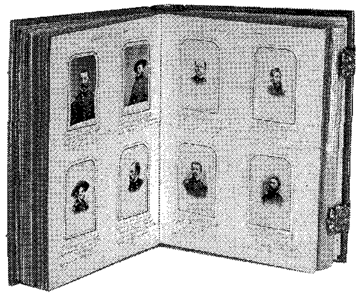

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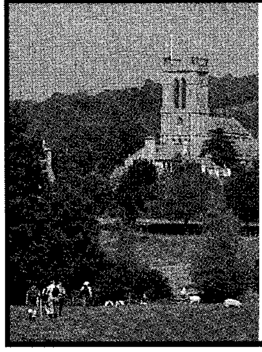

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MY FRIEND PACO

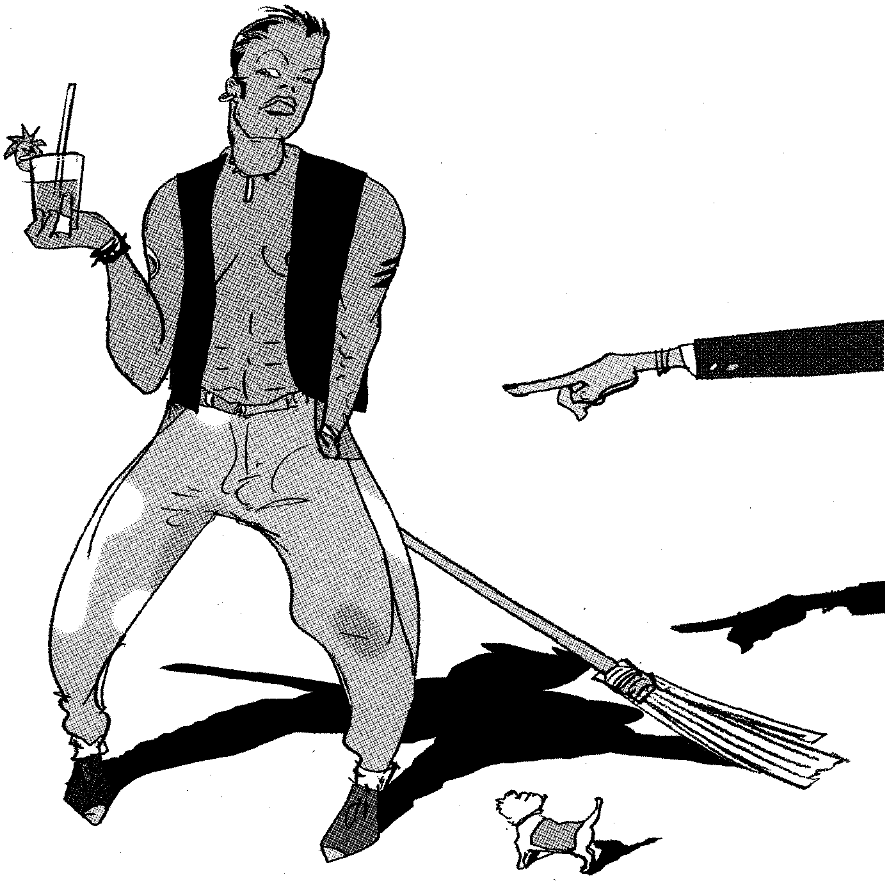
BY PAUL RUDNICK

Now that I have been nominated to serve our nation in the post of Under-Secretary of International Hospitality, questions have arisen regarding my long-term house guest, Paco. I would like to remove all doubts as to the nature of our relationship: Paco is not my servant, my pool boy, or my masseur; he is simply a well-proportioned, eighteen-year-old illegal immigrant and budding filmmaker/novelist/healer whom I am guiding toward citizenship.

I do not wish President Bush to feel in any way compromised by my affiliation with Paco, who first appeared on my doorstep two years ago, shivering in just a Speedo and a thin T-shirt that read "Bipartisan." Reluctantly, he accepted my offer of temporary shelter, a hot meal, and inclusion in my will, and, in a halting whisper, he told me his story.

Paco was born in either Acapulco, Buenos Aires, or Albuquerque, but because he has an undiagnosed learning disability it varies. His father was a proud man, who supported his thirty-two children by teaching them to stand very still and then renting them out as highway cones. Paco's mother was a deeply religious woman who doted on Paco and took him to Mass every day, to pray for Satan's return. Paco's childhood was lacking in such amenities as food, running water, and lifelike poured-resin statues of chiselled male torsos, but it was rich in love. Tragically, his entire family was slaughtered by either a hurricane, a tidal wave, or a one-armed man; owing to Paco's charming but wayward English, I was unsure of the exact meaning of his phrase "Whatever."

As a very young teen-ager, Paco



dreamed of coming to America, a land he'd glimpsed only in tattoos. His goal, he told me with that shy smile of his, was either to become a doctor or a lawyer or to kill one. He had set sail in a leaky inner tube, across the Olympic-size pool of a Carnival cruise ship, where, as he told me, "the Red Cross" had provided him with a de-luxe stateroom. Finally, after a perilous journey, he had washed ashore near Fort Lauderdale, where he staggered to the doorway of my condominium, thanks to luck, a powerful will toward freedom, and an out-of-date personal ad. The next morning, I told Paco that, since he was in this country illegally, I could not hire him, but that I would be more than happy to help him study for his citizenship exam, especially the section about vacuuming. I knew there would be questions, but when I looked into Paco's brimming eyes, and those of his slightly younger cousin in the Polaroid, I didn't have the heart to report him to the authorities. Yes, I am guilty: guilty of caring.

Paco continued to study relentlessly for the exam, memorizing the Bill of Rights, the names of all the U.S. Presidents, and which scented candles went in the lanai. Paco never, I repeat, never, kept regular working hours at my home, as my constant late-night phone calls to local discos and the police station will attest. And, yes, sometimes, on very rare occasions, I did lend Paco small amounts of folding money, but only for origami. Paco never worked for me; as he put it, using one of his wise native proverbs, "To know the guest room of such a portly retired pharmacist is a pleasure of the gods."

And so I ask President Bush, Congress, and the American people to confirm my nomination; along with most of my fellow-appointees, I am pro-life, tough on crime, and crazy about that Ryan Phillippe. Please let me serve. ♦

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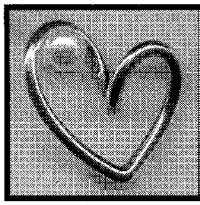

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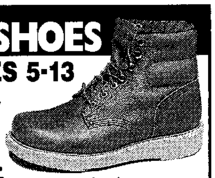

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NEW YORK JOURNAL

POWER AND THE PARROT

Feral birds, switch hotels, and other secrets of the grid.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

The City of New York sits on a power grid. This is not the power grid one reads about in magazines, where rich men reassure one another of their existence by eating the same food in the same place at the same time. It is an honest-to-God grid, consisting of thousands of miles of cables and wires and pipes, all carrying electrons—organized into do-with-me-what-you-will currents and let-me-tell-you-what-I'm-thinking pulses—and it runs on just about every street in the city, below the ground in Manhattan and mostly aboveground outside it. Strange animals and objects erupt on the grid, and two of the strangest of these are the feral parakeets of Flatbush and the switch hotels of lower Manhattan. Feral parakeets are (probably) pet birds that have escaped and gone to live in the wild or, anyway, on the power poles of Flatbush. They are flourishing, and their presence has raised interesting ornithological, and even legal, issues, not to mention a hell of a racket in Flatbush. A switch hotel—often called a carrier or telecom hotel—is a great big building that eighteen months ago might have been filled with people and is now inhabited exclusively by switches, both servers and routers, who rent small locked rooms in which they exchange electrons, making dreamy machine love to other machines all night long, and sucking more power from the grid below than any tenants ever have before. Both the birds and the buildings resonate to the deepest, alligator-in-the-sewers myth of New York—to the notion that we have introduced strangers among us who not only have made themselves at home but have actually moved out on their own.

The parakeets can be found in a couple of different places and approached in a couple of different ways. There is a large colony of them in Green-Wood Cemetery, but the densest concentration, according to Jen Uscher, a Columbia graduate student and bird-lover who is working on a thesis about New York birds, is right on and around the campus of Brooklyn College, at the end of the No. 2 line. The neighborhood there, apart from the parakeets, is an outer-borough mixture of long-established African-Americans, new East Indian immigrants (whose stores dominate the shopping streets), and Orthodox Jews (whose small shuls are set along the residential avenues).

In the early morning, Jen often takes the No. 2 out from Park Slope, where she lives, to look at the parakeets, and she is often with her boyfriend, Jason. Jen is a birder, but a democratic one. As a girl in Fairfax, Virginia, she kept pigeons—real city pigeons. She is a small, intently pretty young woman who has the eager eyes, quick mind, and you'd-be-amazed-how-much-fun-the-subway-can-be avidity of the new New Yorker.

As she and Jason turned down Avenue I toward Twenty-eighth Street one recent Friday morning, she said, "The parakeets were supposed to be eradicated in the early seventies, but here they are. Can't you hear them already?" First there was nothing, then a distant static-electricity crackle, and finally an intense chattering, like a chorus line shaking maracas in a forties South American musical. The sound filled the quiet street of one-family houses with napkin front yards. "You *hear* them first, but they're not hard to see," Jen went on. "These birds are so bold. They're real New Yorkers. They have so much attitude. I'm amazed they don't drive more people crazy. They're tough, social birds who live in colonies. Look right there!" She pointed to a flock of about ten feral parakeets sitting on the wires running between power poles.

The term "feral parakeet" calls to mind a furtive escaped songbird, perky but vulnerable, its small heart fluttering, a hunted look in its eye. This image

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does not apply to the feral parakeets of Flatbush. What they got in Flatbush are not feral parakeets. What they got in Flatbush are wild parrots. Filling the trees and power lines along Avenue I are great big bright-green pirate-ready parrots, with sharp, hooked beaks and blue wing feathers and raucous, jeering voices, tens and tens of tens of them, chattering like Mike and the Mad Dog after a Giants game. Their nests, of twigs and sticks, are immense hanging *trulli*, with multiple entrances—only slightly smaller than the spaces that are usually rented in the city to people like Jen and Jason for nine hundred dollars a month. (Technically, a parrot is just a big parakeet; there is no sharp line between the species.)

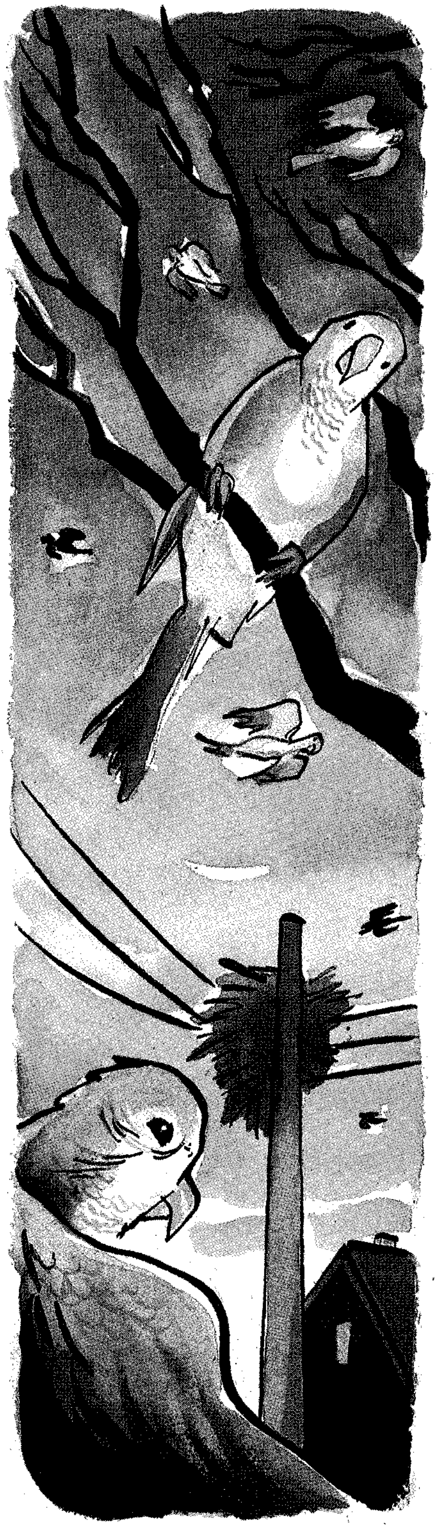
"They usually build their nests on high-voltage power poles—there's something about power entrances—and if their nests catch on fire they can cause outages," Jason said. "There's even a Web site that offers solutions for infestations. The power companies regard them as a major pest."

Jen watched the birds fly back and forth—calling to one another from tree to tree, going in and out of the many entrances and exits to their communal nest. "They don't even look that cold, you know?" she added. "I used to keep parrots, and when they got loose they were all fluffed up. I like to see pet birds that have gone wild. It's like they're getting the last laugh."

A Hasidic woman walked by. She was wearing sneakers and a shawl. She did not even look up at twelve big parrots that were cawing in her front yard. She stopped to read a poster, though, that someone had pasted on the power pole: "Jewish Women," it read in part. "Find Out the Kabalist Secrets of What Makes Women Tic. Only at Hillel this Wed. 12-2 PM. Free Chinese Food Lunch!"

One parrot gave a shot to another with his beak—playfully, but he did it. "They're very aggressive," Jen said solemnly. "There's one report that they killed a house sparrow in Pittsburgh."

The feral parakeets of Flatbush have given rise to a certain amount of affection (there's a playground in Flatbush decorated with a frieze of metal parrots), a certain amount of resentment (Con Ed, in particular, sees them as rats with wings in drag), and a lot of theorizing.



Con Ed views the wild parrots of Flatbush as rats with wings in drag.

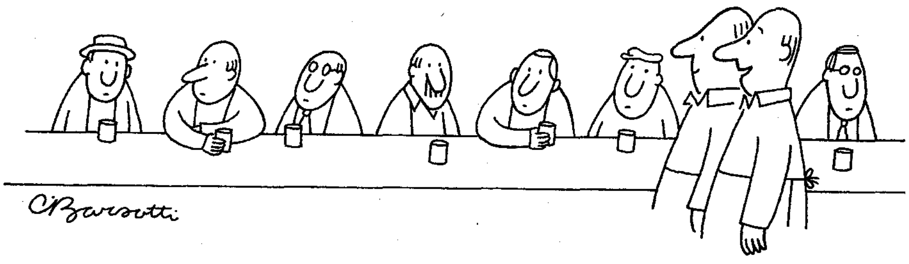
MARCELLUS HALL

The theorizing turns on the question of how big green parrots got loose in Brooklyn in the first place, why they don't mind the cold, and why every attempt to get rid of them has failed. Here is pretty much all that is known about the feral parakeets of Flatbush: They come from South America. They are a subtropical bird, native mostly to Argentina, genus and species *Myiopsitta monachus*. In the wild, they're usually called Monk parrots; pet owners refer to them as Quaker parrots. They are highly intelligent. They are good talkers—they have at least eleven different vocalizations—and excellent imitators. They are unique among the three hundred and thirty or so species of parrots because they live in co-ops. Their nests can contain from one to six pairs, each with a separate chamber and entrance hole.

The folk explanation of how they got here is that a crate carrying Monks broke open at Kennedy airport in 1968, and the birds got free and started a local settlement. (They were first seen that year, and were first observed breeding, in Valley Stream, Long Island, in 1971.) Among serious bird theorists, though, the crate-broke-open-at-Kennedy theory of the origins of the feral parakeets is about as well regarded as the vegetables-just-fell-in-the-pan theory of the origin of pasta primavera around the same time. One strong argument against the theory is that a colony of Monks exists in Hyde Park, in Chicago, near the campus of the University of Chicago—an even colder climate—and the Chicago parrots were also seen for the first time in the late sixties. This would seem to demand a crate-broke-open-at-O'Hare-right-around-then-too theory. The best guess seems to be that both colonies are the consequence of Monk escapees. ("I've never known a pet bird who didn't get away sooner or later, and they don't always come home," Jen points out.)

The Monk parrots, like so much that comes north to us, manage to be both illegal and expensive. At least ten states won't let you own them as pets, partly out of fear that they will go feral and drive the local birds crazy. The parrots are also said to carry psittacosis. At first, New York State tried to kill them off, and by 1975 they were all thought to be dead. They were not. Although they may live outside the law, Monk parrots have a street value in the pet trade of around two hundred dollars a bird. It is said that one local pet-store owner tried to climb the poles of Flatbush to capture them and cash in but came away empty-handed and pecked.

No one has a very good explanation of how the birds survive the harsh winters here. One theory, popular among



"It's kind of sweet when they're all settled in like this."

• •

people who have actually lived in Argentina, is that the climate in Argentina is not all that temperate. Another is that the parrots are adaptable. This theory is circular, of course—they survive because they're good at surviving—but then so are most theories about how immigrant groups thrive in New York. (Nobody thought that Koreans had a particular affinity for fruit, or, for that matter, the Irish for police work, before they came here.)

A theory popular among pigeons is that the parrots survive because they're pushy. Jen and Jason like to watch the parrots around the playing field of Brooklyn College. They have nested high up in the light stanchions that circle the field; beneath the lights, on little platforms made for upkeep, are nests, and the parrots swoop down to the field to wander around and dis the sparrows. On this cold morning, some parrots had flown down to the ground and were out walking on the tired gray snow, searching for bird seed near a chain-link fence.

"I've never seen that, parrots walking on snow," Jen said.

Three or four sparrows were feeding greedily with the parrots. Nearby, though, a couple of pigeons were giving them a sour, disconsolate, Archie Bunker, who-let-the-element-in? look.

"Well, *they're* strangers, too," Jen said. "All the common birds of New York are exotics. Pigeons, house sparrows, starlings . . . They all came from outside North America and got introduced to the continent."

"Maybe parrots are the next pigeons," Jason said.

"I've read lots of good scientific reasons why they can't be," Jen said carefully. "For one thing, unlike pigeons the Monk parakeets don't breed all year round. But people said they couldn't survive here, and they did, and people said they were eradicated in the seventies, and they weren't, and here they are in winter."

The bright-green parrots were walking in the snow. They were chattering wildly, telling one another about the last thing that sparrow said in Pittsburgh. The two pigeons stood on the sidewalk and watched them, furious.

"I've never seen a mouse here, not once, never," the night watchman was saying that night, up on the tenth floor of what was once a warehouse, at 325 Hudson Street. The windows of 325 Hudson are not dark at night, nor do they have the soulful checkerboard pattern—this one working late, this one gone home—of most office buildings late at night. The windows all glow faintly, and the building hums. This is because 325 Hudson is a switch hotel. Switch hotels, which real-estate people prefer to call carrier hotels, are the cleanest buildings in New York—security-conscious, sterile, airtight, and animal-free. They are buildings that are filled with very heavy, very expensive, very power-thirsty telecom equipment, which allows computers to talk to one another on telephone lines. Switch hotels have been in existence for only about five years, but in the commercial real-estate boom they have boomed the loudest. There are at least seven switch hotels in Manhattan: 325 Hudson, 60 Hudson, 32 Avenue of the Americas, 111 Eighth Avenue, 636 Eleventh Avenue, 75 Broad Street, and 85 Tenth Avenue. They exist because behind the paper ballerinas of the virtual and the light-footed electronic lurk, unseen, the steadfast tin soldiers of heavy machinery. A switch hotel is the place where the tin soldiers and the paper ballerinas sleep together, and, since each pair couples a little differently, it does not want the others to see exactly what it's doing. This is why a switch hotel is called a switch "hotel"—because the space in it is rented out to different companies, and each tenant jealously guards his privacy.

Now the night watchman shone his flashlight along the floor. It caught a little kitchen that had been set up when the tenth floor was renovated for the "collocation" room of a company called Net2000. It had a blue terrazzo floor, brushed-aluminum cabinets. Inside the cabinets were tiny packets of instant coffee, lined up in perfect rows, untouched by human hand. "O brave new world," a man from Cushman & Wakefield, which manages 325 Hudson Street, said, in awe. Just to the right, behind a wall of glass, in a space that not long ago was a warehouse for Century 21, seven-foot racks of switches winked rapid little red lights at one another.

Switches come in two kinds, servers and routers. Servers hold on to things—Web pages, most often—while routers take people who are searching for things on servers and send them somewhere else. Only the eye of love can tell a router from a server. The rooms that hold the switches are noisy, and they are hot. The hum of the giant air-conditioning units that are needed to cool them, even when there is a chill in the air and snow on the ground for parrots to walk on, is as loud as the subway. Big orange pipes filled with fibre-optic cable reach down to them. At the entrance to the bedroom where Net2000 keeps its routers and servers, which it rents out to high rollers for high prices, there is a handprint ID check—the kind you see in James Bond movies. You can get in to service the switches only if they recognize the touch of your hand. (Some of the rooms in a switch hotel use retinal identification: you have to look the switches sincerely in the eye to be allowed in.)

Switch hotels are generally owned or managed by real-estate developers, who convert warehouses that have high ceilings, strong floors, and ugly fronts. They have to have high ceilings to hold the seven-foot vertical switch racks and the ducts that run above them; strong floors to hold the heavy machinery; and ugly fronts because if they didn't they would be turned into lofts where people who work with switches live. Then the developer rents out space, at about sixty dollars a square foot, to telecom companies, which specialize in trafficking data and information, and which install the racks and equipment. Then the company rents out space on the machines to A.O.L. or Yahoo or whoever wants it. Each tenant—it is part of telecom-hotel etiquette—makes a point of keeping separate from the other tenants. In particular, each has an emergency two-megawatt generator on the roof, entirely its own, no sharing. "They want to be completely independent," the real-estate man said. "Everybody else in the building will go down, but we'll still be running."

It is often said that switch hotels are in Manhattan because it is necessary to reamplify fibre-optic signals every mile or so. The real reason that big telecom companies like to keep their switches in dark rooms in Manhattan is that they think it's sexy. "It's a marketing issue as much as anything," said James Somoza, a broker at Cushman & Wakefield who is the Alice Mason of the switch hotel. "It's a fit-and-finish issue; they want to come and be able to see their equipment. They want to show their clients a nice facility. And there are back-haul-charges issues—the closer you are to the user, the cheaper it is. Also, having the switches in Manhattan makes it easier to have a self-healing loop." A self-healing loop is one in which if a section of the network breaks down the electronic traffic reverses flow and runs in the opposite direction, bypassing the break. "But there's no absolute reason why the switches couldn't be kept in Long Island City or New Jersey. That people can afford Manhattan rents to keep machines in the dark—well, I guess it's just a sign of how much money there has been in telecoms in the past decade."

The interior of a switch hotel on a Friday night in 2001 looks exactly like the interior of a SoHo gallery on a Saturday afternoon circa 1985: the same tiny, cryptic lettering, the same inexplicable arrangements of racks and liquids and bolts and electric cells, the same pervasive air of sterility and airless ominousness. The battery boxes for the emergency generators, which are kept in bright side chapels near the dark switch rooms, are translucent tubs half-filled with liquid, with copper buses above as shiny as pennies, and as deadly as power lines. (They are alive with electricity, and hold no insulation.)

Most people who develop and rent out switch hotels are aware of the paradox they suggest, which is that the more virtual the world gets the heavier the machines are to get it that way, and the more space they take up in Manhattan. "That was the one thing no one really thought about the New Economy," James Somoza said. "How much power you would need to run it. A telecom hotel demands a hundred watts per square foot." A normal office needs, at most, around six watts per square foot. "I mean, this is the Internet," he said, standing among the chattering switches. "You're looking at it. It smells like an old Lionel train set. It weighs a ton. It sits on the floor on Hudson Street. Virtual reality depends on the strength of this floor."

Late that night, the night watchman was talking excitedly about the ID equipment, the New Economy, life among the switches. The night watchman in a switch hotel is actually more of a concierge, and knows something about his guests. The watchman continued his rounds.

"It's the only place in 2001 that looks like 2001," the real-estate man said, looking over the rows and rows of red blinking lights that fill the busy, empty building, and shaking his head.

New York itself can sometimes seem to be a giant switch, taking in improbable immigrants and routing them out as ideal tenants. If the parrots recall our ethnic origins, the telecom machines are, from a real-estate agent's point of view, the perfect renters of the future. They have everything: they are clean, intelligent, and reliable, don't own pets, and spend a lot of their own money on improvements. Each tenant spends as much as half a million dollars for generators and batteries, in case of a blackout, which until recently no one thought could ever happen. Now the men who own the switches wake up in their beds to contemplate all those things which were, surely, never meant to happen: the bankruptcy of a state power corporation; an earthquake on the Upper East Side; a fire in Flatbush and a sudden flurry of green feathers. ♦

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ANNALS OF MEDICINE

THE OUTLAW DOCTOR

Cancer researchers used to call him a fraud. What's changed?

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

Nicholas Gonzalez, part Mexican, part Italian, all American, and very ambitious, grew up in Queens, attended New York City public schools, and graduated, Phi Beta Kappa and magna cum laude, from Brown University in 1970, where he majored in English literature. He then returned to New York and began a career as a journalist. Gonzalez had some early success, including a cover story in *New York* magazine, and he started to specialize in medical subjects. It didn't take him long to realize, however, that he would rather do it than write about it. He went to Columbia and signed up for the courses required to attend medical school. After that, he applied to Stanford, Yale, Johns Hopkins, and Cornell, among other places. He was accepted by them all.

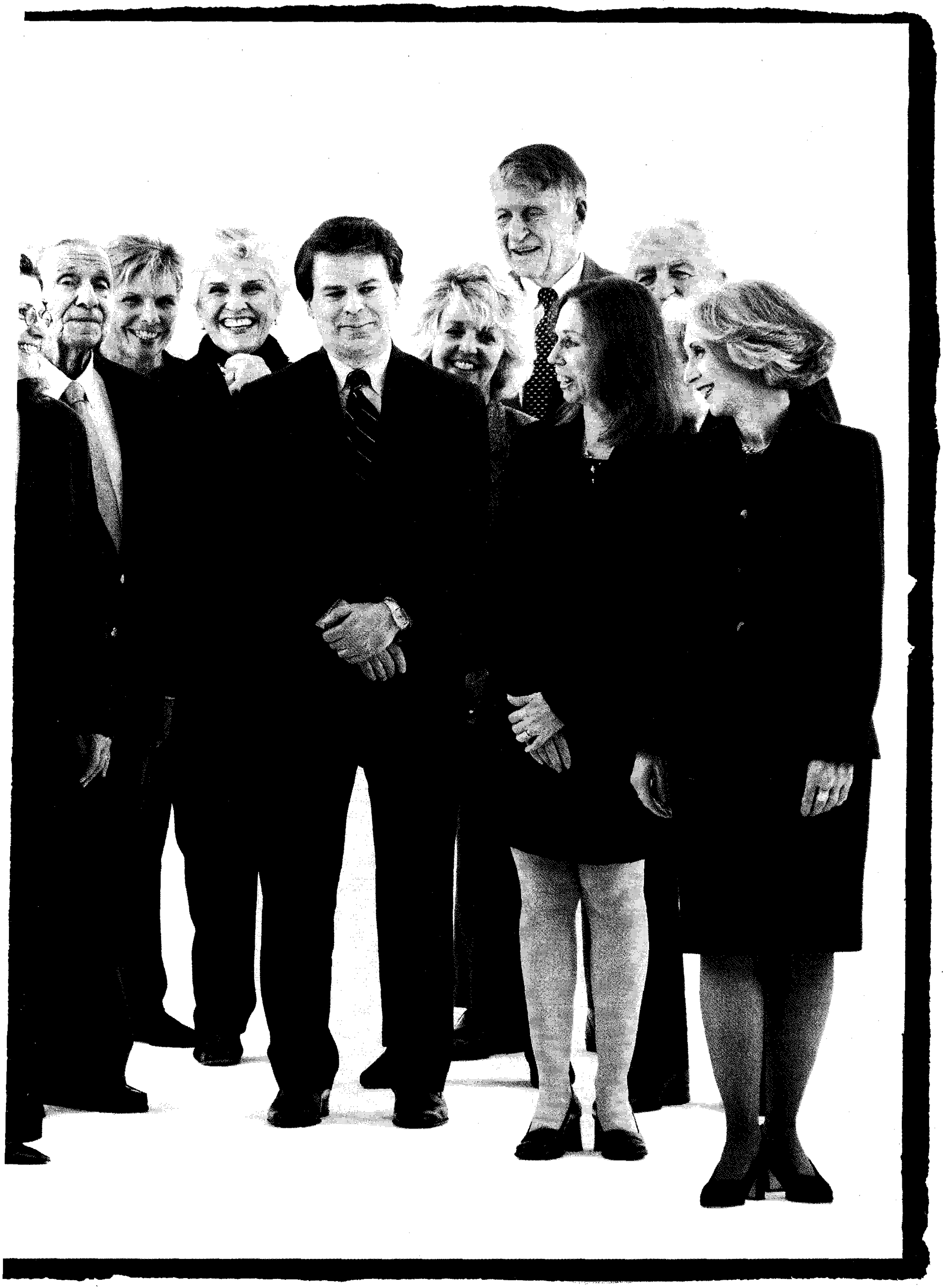
"I thought about it for exactly five minutes," Gonzalez told me the first time we met, early last fall. "There really was no choice. I wanted to go to Cornell because it was affiliated with Memorial," by which he meant Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, one of America's most important research hospitals. "In just a few blocks you have Memorial and Rockefeller and Cornell. It's the center of the world for cancer research. I wanted to study there, become chief of medicine, and work there for the rest of my life. That was the only goal I ever had."

His career got off to a promising start. In 1980, Gonzalez apprenticed himself to Robert A. Good, a medical pioneer who had performed the first successful bone-marrow transplant in humans, and who was then president of Sloan-Kettering. Good encouraged students to follow their hunches, and Gonzalez, by the end of his second year in medical school, had developed one: he was fascinated by the relationship between nutrition and cancer—an area of research then gathering momentum. A friend had awakened Gonzalez's interest by telling him about William Donald Kelley, an orthodontist from Grapevine, Texas, who over the previous twenty years had developed a staggeringly complex nutritional and metabolic approach to treating cancer. Kelley, who had studied biochemistry, became ill in 1963 and was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. (No biopsy was ever made to confirm the diagnosis.) He refused standard care, treated himself, and got better. Gradually, Kelley took on other patients for whom conventional medicine seemed to offer little hope.

By the time one of those patients, the actor Steve McQueen, died of mesothelioma, in 1980, Kelley had become widely recognized as an authority on nontoxic cancer therapy. He had also become notorious—largely as a result of frequent, unequivocal claims he made that his nutritional approach could cure malignancies. That the right diet could help prevent certain cancers had been assumed for decades; treating the disease with nutrition alone, however, seemed reckless. Kelley was denounced by the American Cancer Society, which put his therapy on its unproven-methods blacklist. He was investigated by state, local, and federal authorities and vilified by them all. Cancer specialists viewed him as the definitive quack, a man who relied on remedies long since discarded by orthodox medicine—such as coffee enemas, and enzyme pills that, he claimed, would "digest" tumors. Kelley was not at all what Gonzalez's professors at Cornell had in mind when they encouraged him to explore the links between nutrition and cancer. In fact, if the Food and Drug Administration had had

PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS CALLIS

Nicholas Gonzalez, with some of his patients, says, "You don't do chemotherapy and Gonzalez. You do one or the other." His treatments require diets, enemas, and pills.



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"The suggestions are supposed to go in the box."

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a Ten Most Wanted list, Kelley's name would surely have been on top.

"So I stumbled across this nut," Gonzalez told me, a rueful smile spreading across his face. "Crazy old Dr. Kelley. He was infamous. Kelley was from Texas, but he literally was forced to flee in the dead of night. They took away his dental license, and they put him in jail. Eventually, he settled in Washington state."

Kelley believed that a fundamental cause of cancer was the body's inability to control the growth of protein or to digest it properly, and he said this was due to an enzyme deficiency. He was not the first to make such a hypothesis. The laetrile movement, founded in the early fifties by Ernst T. Krebs, Sr., was based on an allied assertion: that a chemical found naturally in the pits of apricots could fight tumors. Like Krebs, Kelley rejected the common view that the immune system provides the first defense against cancer. Instead, he prescribed massive supplements of an enzyme normally produced by the pancreas, which he claimed should circulate in the bloodstream and break protein down as it appears there. Kelley also stressed the role of nutrition in treating cancer, saying that the genetic determinants of human metabolism vary so greatly that a diet guaranteed to cure one man would rush the next to his grave.

By the time Gonzalez met him, in 1981, Kelley had nearly a thousand patients. He required them to complete nutritional surveys consisting of up to thirty-two hundred questions, and he offered his supplements through the mail. He also developed a complicated computer program that designed diets for each patient. Kelley considered daily coffee enemas essential to his treatment because, in his view, they would cleanse the liver and gallbladder, purging the body of bile, waste, and accumulated toxins. To help people comply, he even marketed a particularly strong roast, called Kelley Koffee. His book, "One Answer to Cancer," which became a sensation in the health-food-oriented nutritional underground, still enjoys a vogue on the Internet.

"It all seemed insane," Gonzalez told me. "I know that. But the idea of killing the cancer cells without also killing those that are healthy seemed interesting to me. So did the idea of focussing on nutrition. I had lunch with Kelley and I was skeptical. I was as traditional a medical student as you could find. I asked if he would let me look seriously at his research, and he told me to take any records I wanted, interview any patient. 'Look at this theory and see how it works,' he told me. 'Examine it carefully. After that, if you think I'm a quack go tell the world.' "

Kelley's willingness to open his books to outside scrutiny appealed to the journalist in Gonzalez. He still felt that Kelley was not quite sane—after all, he asked some of his sickest patients to eat nothing but raw foods and others to consume as much animal fat as possible. But Gonzalez decided to look into the medical histories of thousands of people that Kelley had treated with this discredited therapy.

At Sloan-Kettering, Good was all for it, reasoning that even if Kelley was a fraud the research could prove valuable. Gonzalez got to work, travelling to Dallas and then to Kelley's farm in the Cascade Mountains of Washington. What began in the summer of 1981 developed into a five-year study in which Gonzalez reviewed the records of every cancer patient who followed the Kelley regime between 1970 and 1982. He made contact with thirteen hundred and six people and interviewed four hundred and fifty-five of them. He eventually selected fifty for his study, all of whom had been diagnosed by well-regarded specialists—and not by Kelley. In the end, Gonzalez produced a three-hundred-page monograph, "One Man Alone," that describes in carefully documented detail the results of Kelley's treatment.

The manuscript was never published. "Kelley was a weird man and he was eccentric," Gonzalez said. "People considered him a quack. I understood all that, yet I had no choice other than to face the fact that he had hundreds of patients with obviously terminal disease who were still alive five, ten, and fifteen years later. It was there in the data, and to me, ultimately, data are the only things that can tell the truth."

Cancer specialists were not impressed. They argued that in some cases the patients' histories were inconclusive, in others any improvement might be attributed to earlier treatments. In fact, other researchers had experimented for years with therapies like those that Kelley had relied upon without success. Gonzalez was warned that his intellectual curiosity was slipping over the edge into an obsession. It was too late, though: Gonzalez had become a true believer. He completed a fellowship in immunology in 1986, and the next year, when Kelley stopped seeing patients, Gonzalez made the only decision he felt was possible: he returned to Manhattan and opened an office.

Soon Gonzalez became as reviled as Kelley, whom he had come to consider his mentor. Labelled a charlatan and a fraud, Gonzalez was investigated and reprimanded in 1994 by the New York State medical board for "departing from accepted practice." He was forced to submit to psychological examinations and undergo retraining. In the past decade, he has lost two malpractice suits and has been denounced on national television. There have even been efforts to remove his license. Like Kelley, he prescribes coffee enemas twice a day. To assess each patient's "cancer burden," Gonzalez relies on a diagnostic test—based on hair analysis and a shaky method of measuring energy levels called radionics—that has been dismissed by conventional researchers as worthless. But Gonzalez has never stopped taking patients.

"There is really only one truth," Gonzalez told me. "Either cancer patients get better with my treatment or they do not. And, if they do, I could not care less whether it involved moon dust or microbes from Pluto. What matters is that many—not all, by any means—of my patients are alive when they should be dead. And what has that made me in the eyes of the traditional cancer establishment? Simple. I am Gonzalez, the quack, the fraud, the doctor who lies to cancer patients, steals their money, and kills them. If there was a signup sheet at N.I.H. to run me down with a truck, people would stand on line for hours."

Nicholas Gonzalez is a burly, pasty-faced man of medium build and moderate height with a helmet of thick brown hair that juts out over his forehead. He wears suits and perfectly knotted silk ties, yet he gives off the appearance of somebody whose only exposure to natural light comes during his morning walk to work. Gonzalez, who is fifty-three, was once married, to his partner in the practice, Linda Isaacs, but since their divorce, in 1993, work occupies all his time. There is an air of intensity about Gonzalez which often makes him difficult to be around. He is not cold, or unusually defensive, but I have met few people more single-minded.

Gonzalez grew up in a family of artists. His grandfather Guillermo was a famous cellist in Mexico, who fought with Pancho Villa's army. Eventually, he moved to New York and performed with the Metropolitan Opera. By the time Gonzalez was six, he told me, he could "hum all the major themes from the Bach violin concertos." Yet as an adult he has been consumed by medicine. Gonzalez has no hobbies, no children, few interests other than cancer and nutrition. That obsession, he told me, ended his marriage. (He and Isaacs work amicably together, and she has since remarried.) I once asked Gonzalez if he thought it odd that a man who tells his patients that the only healthy life is a balanced life could do nothing but work. "My life is the life style I would choose for nobody," he replied. "I used to go to movies and restaurants. I've had brunch and gone to museums and taken vacations, but when I accepted this responsibility everything else became secondary. I don't want to do anything else. I have nothing against people who have normal lives. I am just not one of them."

He and Isaacs work out of an unremarkable medical building in midtown, across the street from the Morgan Library. The offices have a spare, airy feel, like a New Age spa, with wide floorboards and framed pictures of waterfalls. Gonzalez and Isaacs treat about six hundred people, and reject many more patients than they take. Some of those Gonzalez turns away are in the early stages of cancers for which there are accepted treatments, but most are too close to death to be helped. For legal as well as ethical reasons, he rarely treats such people. Because insurance companies won't cover his program, Gonzalez's patients are required to come up with about eight thousand dollars a year to cover the costs of the many supplements they will take each day for the rest of their lives.

Although he has been portrayed as a medical ideologue, Gonzalez has never explicitly rejected the more orthodox precepts of his profession. On the other hand, he never apologizes for what he does, which is to treat the deadliest can-

"Someday, you may thank me for breaking what was becoming, in this family, a vicious cycle of inheritance!"

cers in ways that no conventional doctor ever would. "This is not about magnets, massage, oils, echinacea, or some other voodoo," he told me. "I am offering a primary treatment for major cancer. You don't do chemotherapy and Gonzalez. You do one or the other. I have been referred to as the doctor of last resort—and perhaps I am. But I am not in hiding, not in Mexico. If my results work, they work. If not, I'll walk away."

Almost alone in the world of alternative practitioners, Gonzalez insists that he wants his research evaluated independently, by the best scientists. Until recently, most doctors had been unwilling to spend the time. Yet something strange has started to happen: the medical outlaw is suddenly in demand. Doctors who used to shun him now sometimes refer patients. His work is discussed without condescension in such mainstream publications as the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*.

Gonzalez's persistence is clearly one reason for this new legitimacy. Politics is another. In 1999, Gonzalez received $1.4 million from the National Institutes of Health to compare his enzyme-nutritional therapy with the best chemotherapy now available for the treatment of advanced pancreatic cancer. As a percentage of the fifteen billion dollars that the federal government spends on medical research annually, the grant amounts to what one federal health official described to me as "decimal dust." In fact, the Gonzalez grant is not even the largest sum doled out recently by the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, a federal institute that Congress created in 1998 to assess the stupefyingly large armamentarium of novel and untested treatments that now play central roles in American health care. Simply by funding the Gonzalez trial, however, the N.I.H. has turned it into the most significant investigation of an unconventional cancer treatment yet sanctioned by the federal government.

The American public's desire for new ways to treat everything from chronic pain to degenerative diseases has turned alternative medicine into a force so potent that no medical institution of any significance—not even the National Institutes of Health—can afford to ignore it. Last year, the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Harvard Medical School, its equally conservative affiliate, even competed for the right to house a new department of integrative medicine. Harvard won, to the regret of some of its faculty.

It has become routine for patients to demand treatments based as much on anecdote and rumor as on science. They ask about energy healing and all manner of oddball supplements that they have found on the Internet. There are few data to prove that most popular home remedies, such as echinacea and St. John's-wort, are safe, let alone effective. But the absence of certainty has created a vague new zone of possibility, and what was once considered a touchstone for fake science is now a fundamental fact of American public health. The movement had always been filled with fringe figures like Kelley, but there is no longer anything "fringe," or even alternative, really, about alternative medicine.

Americans spent twenty-seven billion dollars on unproven remedies in 1997, and are expected to spend much more this year. One study, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, by David Eisenberg, who is now director of Harvard's Center for Alternative Medicine Research and Education, found that forty-two per cent of American adults have used some form of untested therapy. Gonzalez is one of the most visible beneficiaries of this new willingness to look beyond the borders of scientific method. His study, which is being carried out by the Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, will examine patients with a form of pancreatic cancer which, in most cases, is swiftly fatal.

Gonzalez first presented a selection of his cases to the National Cancer Institute in July of 1993, at a conference in Bethesda. Officials suggested that he organize a small pilot study. Gonzalez enlisted the late Dr. Ernst L. Wynder, who was the president of the American Health Foundation and is often credited with providing the first compelling evidence that smoking causes cancer. Wynder helped Gonzalez look for funding, and eventually he found it at the Nestlé company, which, as the world's largest food conglomerate, has a significant interest in exploring the links between nutrition and disease.

Gonzalez and Linda Isaacs followed the progress of eleven patients with advanced pancreatic cancer. (They compared them with twelve others, each of whom they saw once but who did not choose to participate in the program.) The patients in the study had been diagnosed before Gonzalez met them; the cancer was confirmed independently by board-certified pathologists, verified by specialists hired by Procter & Gamble, which supported the study, and finally reviewed by oncologists at Columbia. ("We knew from the start that we would be attacked for our approach," Gonzalez told me. "So we deliberately detached ourselves from diagnosing these patients. I never even met the pathologists who read the slides.") Pancreatic cancer is the fifth-leading cause of cancer death in the United States. The five-year survival rate is four per cent, and more than eighty per cent of patients die in the first year. In the largest study carried out by the National Cancer Institute, none of the hundred and twenty-six participants—all with late-stage pancreatic cancer treated by conventional chemotherapy—lived longer than nineteen months.

The Gonzalez patients did much better, and in 1999 he and Isaacs published the data in the peer-reviewed journal *Nutrition and Cancer*. The results, though obviously not definitive with such a small number of patients, were hard to ignore. The average patient receiving the best conventional care for advanced pancreatic cancer survived less than six months; the median survival time for the Gonzalez patients was seventeen months. Two of his patients lived for four years and one for almost five. In an editorial that accompanied the article, Wynder and a colleague warned that the study may have suffered from selection bias (which can happen when researchers knowingly or unconsciously include their most successful or compliant patients, thus skewing the results). But the authors added that it was time somebody looked seriously at therapy that came from outside "the constraints of mainstream science."

The results surprised many of those

who saw them, including John Chabot, who is the vice-chairman of the department of surgery at Columbia Presbyterian, and a principal investigator of the federally funded study of Gonzalez's research. “Frankly, when I first read about it, I said, ‘That can't possibly work,’ ” Chabot said. “Then I read the pilot data . . . and said, ‘There really might be something there.’ I had to come to grips with it myself. I have no idea how or why it might work, but the data are compelling enough that I can't ignore it.”

“You have creepy peasants.”

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It is an unpleasant fact that the Gonzalez trial should produce fairly rapid results. Because pancreatic cancer kills people so quickly, it should not take long to conclude with statistical certainty whether one group has benefitted more than the other (although even a successful outcome will not fully explain *how* the Gonzalez regimen works). The trial will follow between seventy and ninety patients, half of whom will be treated under the supervision of Dr. Chabot, at Columbia, and receive the best drugs and hospital care available. The others will be placed on the nutrition regime, and be treated by Gonzalez and Isaacs in their office.

“Some people wonder what on earth we are doing,” Jeffrey D. White told me when I went to see him at the National Cancer Institute, where he is director of the office of cancer complementary and alternative medicine. “They say that by investigating a therapy they think is useless we are giving it a special legitimacy. Others are afraid that we will sacrifice the rigors of the scientific method. I understand those fears—we care about scientific method absolutely.

“But Dr. Gonzalez has really been more aggressive at attempting to get his work properly evaluated than any person I have ever encountered. He has some interesting data. Perhaps it will lead to something useful, and perhaps it will not. That is why we do trials. I do know this, though. If you are unwilling to evaluate something promising simply because it seems to come from left field, then there is nothing new you will ever try.”

“Of all the millions of animal species that have ever lived, can anyone name another that cooks its food?” Gonzalez asked during a recent lecture in which he described his nutritional theories in detail. “We are the only species in the history of the world that has done it. It tastes better. If you give animals cooked or raw food, they will always go for cooked. But what does cooking do to food? Food contains minerals and vitamins. Vitamins are mostly heat resistant. The one thing you do destroy when you cook food is enzymes.

“What are enzymes?” he went on. “They are catalysts. They enable chemical reactions to occur. There are reactions in the human body that would take ten thousand years if it were not for catalysts. Enzymes allow them to occur swiftly and efficiently at temperatures that allow us to live.” Gonzalez is convinced that without enough of those enzymes we would almost all develop cancer.

During the eighties, while studying Kelley's nutritional theories, he came across the work of the early-twentieth-century Scottish embryologist John Beard. Beard was fascinated by the placenta, which connects the blood supply of the mother, carrying nutrients and oxygen, to the blood supply of the embryo. Beard noticed that placental cells (called trophoblasts), early in their development, looked like cancer cells—and behaved like them, too. At some point during this early period, however, the trophoblasts stopped growing in the aggressive, uncontrolled way that is the hallmark of cancer.

What, he wondered, could turn a cell that was growing like cancer into a cell that was growing normally? Beard spent years trying to figure it out; nothing made sense until he realized that on the very day the cells stopped growing so rapidly the fetal pancreas began to secrete enzymes. In an adult, the pancreas releases enzymes into the small intestine to aid in digestion. But Beard hypothesized that the principal reason the fetus produced those enzymes was to control the growth of the placenta. Beard believed that one enzyme in particular, called trypsin, was created solely to destroy trophoblasts—and when he injected it into mice it reduced the size of their tumors. If the pancreas failed to generate enough of these enzymes, Beard wrote, the trophoblasts would circulate through the body of both mother and infant, making them vulnerable throughout their lives to cancer.

By 1911, the year Marie Curie received the Nobel Prize for her discovery of how radiation worked, and long before DNA was identified, biologists had largely come to a consensus that cancer resulted from some fundamental damage to cells. That same year, though, Beard published "The Enzyme Treatment of Cancer and Its Scientific Basis," in which he argued that radiation has nothing to do with the cure of cancer and that "it may be that many surgeons would rather themselves die of cancer than admit the truth." Gonzalez repeated similar sentiments to me on several occasions, and he has adopted as a first principle Beard's view that pancreatic enzymes can keep most tumors in check. It is a position many researchers find absurd, since most enzymes entering the bloodstream quickly dissolve into the amino acids that form them. Other scientists have tried, and failed, to find any anti-cancer effects associated with the use of orally administered pancreatic enzymes. Gonzalez claims that conventional doctors don't know what they are doing. "I was taught in physiology that oral enzymes are worthless," Gonzalez said. "And most of my former colleagues will go to their death believing that. They are simply wrong."

Kelley divided humans into dozens of radically different body types and argued that their genetic destinies were the result of millions of years of varied selection pressure. Gonzalez has refined those categories and reduced them essentially to three. "It is absolute insanity to suggest that the whole human species, as different as it is, could be put on one diet," Gonzalez said. "The human species occupies every ecological niche from the Arctic Circle to equatorial rain forests. Eskimos, for example, subsist mostly on fat and red meat. Other groups have evolved to depend almost entirely on their dairy herds, while other groups are vegetarians." Gonzalez says that giving low-fat vegetarian diets to people whose genes require them to eat meat makes about as much sense as raising a lion on hay.

"Despite the considerable media antagonism to animal fats and red meat in general," Gonzalez writes in the instructions to one of his diets, the Moderate Carnivore, "patients such as yourself do best if they include fatty red meat and other animal proteins in their diet at least two times a day." Eskimos provide his favorite cautionary tale. "They have no growing season," Gonzalez said. "They have no fruits. They have no vegetables. The only Eskimos that could survive are those that eat a high-fat, high-protein diet: Yet they are an incredibly hardy group of people, nearly devoid of heart disease, cancer or diabetes." Or, at least, they were.

As Gonzalez tells it, everything was fine for Eskimos when they were eating what he describes as their "factory specification" diet, to which they have adapted over thousands of years. But in the past few decades carbohydrates have been added to the mix. "These were among the healthiest people in the world until they switched their diet to a Western one," he writes. "When they cut their saturated fat consumption from 80 per cent to 40 per cent, they began to develop our pattern of degenerative diseases. For them, fat was the perfect fuel."

People who hope that the Gonzalez regime might offer a simple solution to a terrible illness will be disappointed. It is a gruelling program, requiring each patient to swallow up to a hundred and fifty pills a day, as well as to adhere to a rigid diet and detoxification routine: enemas, liver flushes, and whole-body purges with psyllium husks, which Gonzalez refers to as "the clean sweep." Each day, he follows the regime himself, as a preventive measure, including the two coffee enemas, and he carries his pills around in little Ziploc baggies that poke out of the top of his shirt pocket.

Patients normally take the pills for fifteen days, then flush their systems for five days. This cycle is repeated continually. "People ask me if they need to stay on the program after they feel better," Gonzalez told me, "and I tell

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SHOWCASE BY WILLIAM KLEIN

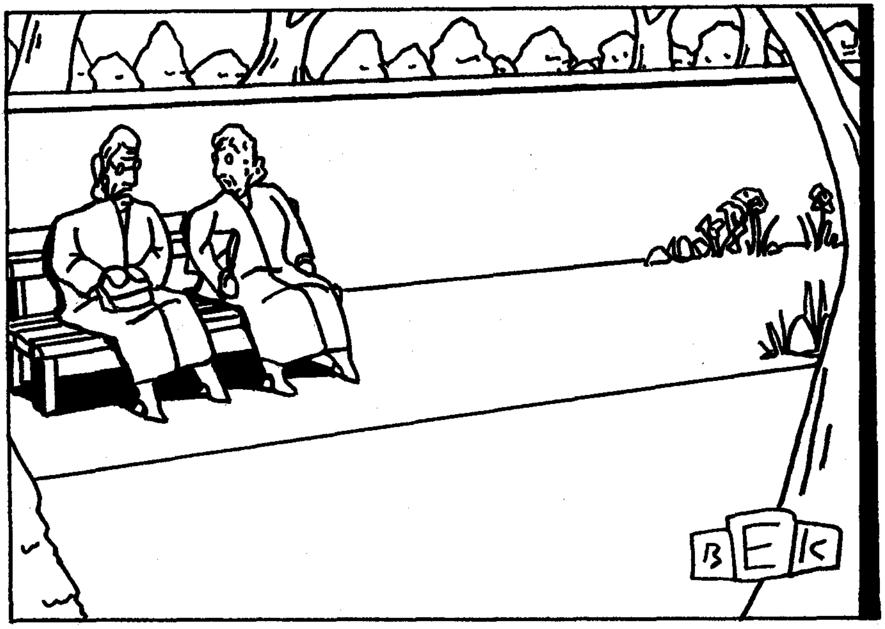
ROLE REVERSAL

At fifty-four, the British actress Charlotte Rampling is, in the polite language of media publicists, "making a comeback." She has the leading role in "Signs & Wonders," a psychological thriller directed by Jonathan Nossiter, which opens next week. The truth is that Rampling never went away; many of her recent movies just didn't register on America's glitz radar. And she has lately taken on the sort of supporting role to which actresses are relegated once they reach a certain age—Aunt Maude in "The Wings of the Dove," and Miss Havisham in a BBC adaptation of "Great Expectations." But Rampling has made more than forty movies since she played Lynn Redgrave's sexually feckless roommate in "Georgy Girl," in 1966. Although her career trajectory—which includes "The Ski Bum" and "Orca: Killer Whale"—has been as unpredictable as her famously neurotic personality, her melancholy beauty and steel-gray eyes have long been imprinted on the collective unconscious of moviegoers.

Women who lead with their damaged psyches have been Rampling's specialty: the unbalanced actress in Woody Allen's "Stardust Memories" (who inspires the compliment "I think they've been putting something wonderful in your lithium"); the Holocaust survivor in "The Night Porter," who resumes a sadomasochistic relationship with a former S.S. officer; the boozy, desperate girlfriend of Paul Newman's down-and-out lawyer in "The Verdict," who is ultimately repaid for her betrayal with a sensational slap across the face. This time, however, she is not the storm but the calm at its center: a woman who remains unflappable even as her husband becomes involved in an increasingly dangerous affair.

—*Emily Nunn*

CONTACT



"It was an incredible journey, but a crappy life."

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them only if they want to stay alive." The list of supplements that Gonzalez hands out to most patients with solid tumors runs to four single-spaced pages. It includes, in part, sixty freeze-dried, porcine-pancreatic enzyme pills (swallowed in six batches, all of which must be taken with water, and none of which may be taken with food or within an hour of a meal). During breakfast and dinner, each patient must swallow capsules of adrenal medulla, amino acids, bone marrow, selenium 50, thyroid, Vitamin A 10,000, and Vitamin E succinate.

There are separate pills for the lymph, liver, and kidney—all to help balance deficiencies caused by lack of enzymes, or because the body is overwhelmed fighting cancer. During lunch, each patient must take a pill with twenty-five thousand units of beta carotene, as well as pills with copper gluconate, manganese glycerophosphate, potassium citrate, and Vitamin D. Twice each day, whenever it's convenient, patients must dilute a mixture of black-walnut formula in water and drink it. Patients who suffer from metal toxicity also need to take nine pills of sodium alginate.

Critics have singled out the coffee enemas for particular ridicule. "I respect his willingness to have his regime studied," Barrie R. Cassileth, a medical sociologist who is chief of integrative medicine at Sloan-Kettering, told me. Cassileth has published some of the most influential articles demonstrating how important alternative therapies and supplements have become. "But the coffee enemas are ludicrous," she said. "He ought to just get rid of them." I found no conventional physician who disagreed.

Gonzalez is fully aware that the enemas are a source of hilarity, disbelief, and even outrage. Over the past few months, he supplied me with a stream of data suggesting that coffee enemas may have been used on the battlefields of Crimea by Florence Nightingale, and he provided me with correspondence that noted that, until the nineteen-seventies, they were included in the Merck Manual, which is the medical doctors' therapeutic bible. "I'm no different from anybody else," he said. "When Kelley started talking about detoxification, I thought he was lapsing into mysticism. At his insistence, though, I did the first one in the bathroom of his Dallas office. And do you know what? I felt better instantly, and I've continued to do them since."

Most of Gonzalez's patients consider his diet even more demanding than the pill regime. For people with pancreatic cancer, Gonzalez prescribes a diet he refers to as the Moderate Vegetarian Metabolizer. It forbids red meat or poultry, because, he claims, digesting them consumes too many of the body's precious pancreatic enzymes. Moderate vegetarian metabolizers are encouraged to eat raw fruits, grains, rice, sprouts, nuts, and seeds and to drink great quantities of fresh vegetable juice. They are also allowed a small amount of fish, eggs, and yogurt for their protein.

There is obviously a profound faith required of those wishing to sign on with Gonzalez. "Are you keeping to your diet?" Gonzalez asked LouElla Merin one morning while I was in his office. Merin is a fifty-nine-year-old bereavement counsellor, with a mop of frizzy hair, who first visited Gonzalez on June 7, 1991, after having been diagnosed with breast cancer. Although at least half of his patients also see more conventional physicians—in part because insurance companies will not reimburse the cost of tests if he orders them—Merin has never been tempted. "I didn't go the orthodox route, because I believe it's burning and poisoning, and it's lethal," she told me. "Why put myself through that?"

We were sitting in Gonzalez's office; the venetian blinds were drawn, and it was dark despite the early hour. I asked why she was so sure that more traditional methods of treating breast cancer—surgery, chemotherapy, radiation—wouldn't have helped. After all, I pointed out, Gonzalez has published just a single paper with data on pancreatic tumors; there is no clear evidence that, even if the results of that initial study are confirmed, enzyme therapy works as well for any other cancers.

"You hear something horrible is going to happen to you and you have to put your faith in something," she said. "And this is where I put it. The treatment made more sense for me than those poisons. It's not like this is fun, you know. But he is a special man, and I trust him." At this point, Merin turned and smiled at Gonzalez, who had said nothing during our conversation. "He is more like a therapist at times—first the man helped save my life and then he changed it. . . . I hug you, I kiss you, I embrace you," she said, blowing him a kiss. Gonzalez is not a sentimental person, but his face flushed even though he acted as if he hadn't heard her.

"Have you been good?" he asked her.

"Are you doing everything you are supposed to do?"

"I'm a ninety-eight-per-center," Merin said, with a soft laugh. "For a half-Italian woman, to have lived nine years without a cannoli—well, that's a sacrifice. But I'm alive. And I plan to stay that way." He asked about her latest hair test. Hair testing is the least comprehensible part of his treatment program. Yet Gonzalez believes in it completely; he sends locks of patients' hair to a self-trained technician in Louisiana, and she analyzes them using a method that he concedes he does not understand. Using the results of such tests, Gonzalez claims that he can gauge the severity of cancer and the vitality of many organs. "I know the data for hair testing are shaky, and that people think it's nutty," he said. "But my answer to the critics is: I don't need it. For the Columbia study, we are not even using it. It is a diagnostic tool. We have tried to fool it many times, and we have always failed. I know it works."

Gonzalez has resisted frequent appeals to set up satellite clinics in other cities; he has also declined to train physicians. Before that happens, he wants the approval—or at least the acceptance—of the medical establishment. "After the trials are over and the people up there"—he pointed vaguely in the direction of the Upper East Side triangle of cancer-research hospitals—"agree that this is a valid approach, then I will train any doctor and I will make my supplements available. I'll even train doctors at Sloan-Kettering," he said with a mischievous grin. "It would be my pleasure."

After leaving Gonzalez's office one day, I wandered up Madison Avenue in search of a vitamin store. I didn't have far to go, because in New York, as in most American cities, there are health-food shops and vitamin outlets on virtually every block. It has become as easy to buy a bottle of acidophilus, St. John's-wort, or ginkgo biloba as it is to pick up a bagel. There are more vitamin shops, at least in Manhattan, than Starbucks. Ten years ago, a pharmacy offered a small assortment of vitamins, often tucked onto a back shelf; today, those same stores are crammed with unguents, crystals, oils, and balms, all promising near-magical benefits.

Gonzalez is nevertheless skeptical about the quality of most vitamins and supplements. "You can buy every pill in every store," he said. "But pills that are called enzymes don't always have enzymes in them—let alone active enzymes in the right formulation. Walking into a vitamin store is a complete crapshoot."

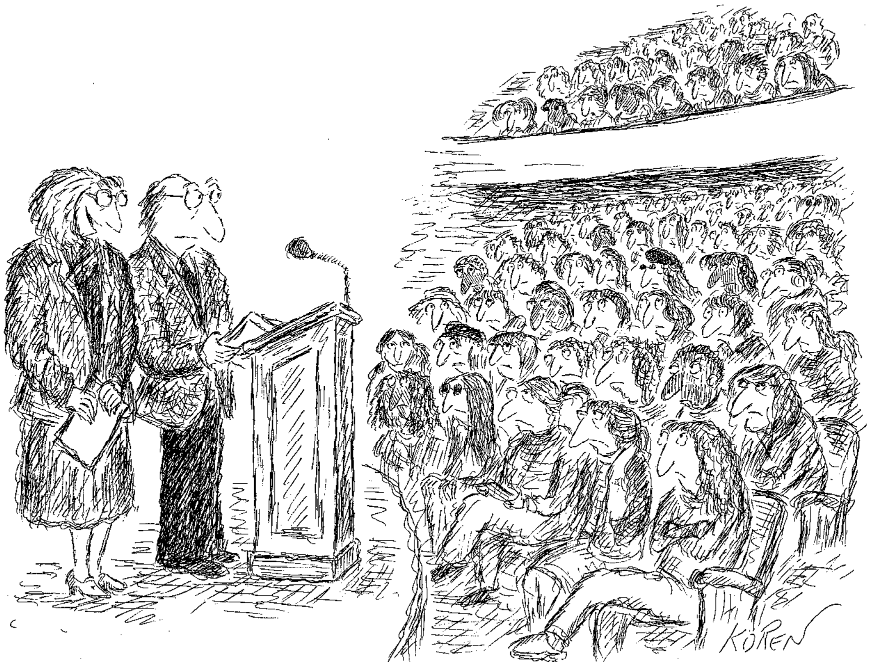
I decided to take a chance, however, and headed off to the nearest G.N.C. There were big cardboard signs to mark each major section: Lifestyle, ScanDiet Weight Management, Preventive Nutrition, Vitamin E & Aminos, and several others. I had been talking to Gonzalez about garlic, and I asked a woman behind the counter if she had garlic pills. She laughed and pointed over my shoulder. There were dozens of bottles, packed in rows along four shelves. The merits of garlic have been recorded since the time of the pharaohs; it seems to have a beneficial effect on cardiovascular health and on immune status; it may reduce low-density lipoprotein, which is the bad type of cholesterol.

I wasn't really sure what to look for, so I asked the saleswoman. She came over, grabbed a bottle, and handed it to me. "This is great," she said. "It'll clear you right up." The label said that it was Garlinase 4000. "What about this?" I asked, holding out a bottle with the brand name of Garlicin, which was next to it. "I don't know," she said, walking back to the cash register. "They are all about the same." If so, I wondered why nearly every G.N.C. also carried Kyolic Garlic Plus, Potent Garlic, Super Garlic, Coated Odorless Triple Garlic, Triple Garlic Plus, Garlic 6000, and Ultimate Garlic, among others.

The garlic display was not nearly so impressive as the selection for ginseng: White Ginseng Root, Siberian Ginseng Root, Ginseng Royal Jelly, and Ginseng Powermax 4X were all available, among many other varieties, each in a range of brands, potencies, capsules, and bottle sizes.

After leaving G.N.C., I went straight to the office of Marion Nestle, the chairman of the department of nutrition and food studies at New York University, and a principal contributor to Surgeon General C. Everett Koop's 1988 "Report on Nutrition and Health." She laughed when I told her what I had experienced. "There's no way to tell if these pills even contain allinase, which is the enzyme in garlic that is most likely to be beneficial," she said. "Half the adult population of the United States is putting this stuff in their mouths. It really does present the biggest challenge we have had in years to the way medicine in this country is practiced."

The term "vitamins" came into common use only in the nineteen-twenties; before that, the idea of pills contain-



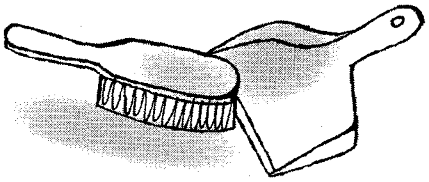
"Good luck with your lecture, Eric—they're loaded for white male."

ing nutrients was unknown. Once such pills appeared, however, their success was immediate, and by 1922 the American Medical Association felt compelled to describe the hype surrounding the products as a "gigantic fraud." It took a national tragedy—the poisoning of a hundred and seven persons, caused by the use of an elixir of sulfanilamide, in 1937—to persuade Congress to pass the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. That law finally granted the Food and Drug Administration the authority it needed to regulate such products. Over the past thirty years, however, as medicine has become more advanced, technical, and monolithic, consumers have grown suspicious, even hostile. People treat their doctors like car salesmen, and many Americans now insist on making health-related decisions for themselves. That has made for more knowledgeable patients, but it has also caused tremendous conflict. In 1993, with supplements of dubious quality and unknown contents flooding the market, the F.D.A. attempted to impose order, proposing to classify many herbs and amino acids as drugs.

As a matter of science policy, the decision made sense. Politically, it was a disaster. The supplement industry launched a withering campaign, telling consumers that unless they moved quickly the federal government would limit their right to buy vitamins—a preposterous claim. Mel Gibson, a self-professed health nut, appeared in the most effective of the advertisements, which was set in a murky future. Gibson played a man whose house is invaded by a SWAT team seeking to confiscate his illegal stash of Vitamin C.

Congress responded immediately. In 1994, it passed the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act, which classified botanical and herbal supplements as foods, not drugs. Manufacturers no longer have to demonstrate that their products work, or are safe; they are not even required to report adverse effects to the F.D.A. False advertising is rarely punished, and the result is on display in every vitamin store in the nation. Some things are forbidden, of course. It is not acceptable to say that pills like chondroitin or glucosamine will cure arthritis, but there is nothing wrong with claiming that they "help support healthy joints." A company cannot say that bilberry cures "heart disease," but it can assert that the plant "keeps your arteries clean," or prevents them "from being narrowed." It is against the law for any firm to state explicitly that it has a treatment for Alzheimer's disease, but all are welcome to claim, without a shred of proof, that they sell supplements that "help mental functioning or memory."

In the six years since the law was enacted, supplement sales in the United States have grown from ten billion dollars a year to more than fifteen billion dollars. The law has led to thousands of new products, and the F.D.A. has not banned a single supplement since it was passed. That doesn't mean the products are safe. The herb A. fangchi, for instance, has been associated with urothelial carcinoma, yet it is for sale everywhere. Among other well-documented examples of herbs producing adverse reactions are germander, which has been associated with acute hepatitis; comfrey, with hepatic veno-occlusive disease; and ephedra, with death from cardiovascular causes. Several studies have suggested that St. John's-wort can alleviate some symptoms of depression, but others have shown that it can drastically reduce the effectiveness of prescription drugs. Last year, the F.D.A. even issued a health advisory on St. John's-wort. But that action was unusual. It is never easy to prove that a drug causes adverse effects, even with those medicines which have been carefully evaluated. Since there are few regulations, nobody really can say what is in many herbs or botanical pills, or how they might interact with even the most benign medicine.



Marion Nestle, at N.Y.U., argues that the surge in alternative therapies reflects a pervasive disillusionment with the medical system, which is increasingly seen as capricious and inexact. "Medicine is about money now, and people have the feeling that doctors and hospitals are not really there to help you," she said. "Everyone has a horror story in the age of H.M.O.s. And it's not a class thing—

THIS HAPPENED

A student, a young woman, in a fourth-floor hallway of her *lycée*,
perched on the ledge of an open window chatting with friends between classes;
a teacher passes and chides her, *Be careful, you might fall*,
almost banteringly chides her, *You might fall*,
and the young woman, eighteen, a girl really, though she wouldn't think that,
as brilliant as she is, first in her class, and *Beautiful, too*, she's often told,
smiles back, and leans into the open window, which wouldn't even be open if it were winter,
if it were winter someone would have closed it (*Close it!*),
leans into the window, farther, still smiling, farther and farther,
though it takes less time than this, really an instant, and lets herself fall. *Herself fall.*

A casual impulse, a fancy, never thought of until now, hardly thought of even now . . .
No, more than impulse or fancy, the girl knows what she's doing,
the girl means something, the girl means to *mean*,
because, it occurs to her in that instant, that beautiful or not, bright yes or no,
she's not who she is, *she's not the person she is*, and the reason, she suddenly knows,

is that there's been so much premeditation where she is, so much plotting and planning,
there's hardly a person where she is, or if there is, it's not her, or not wholly her,
it's a self inhabited, lived in by her, and seemingly even as she thinks it
she knows what's been missing: grace, not premeditation but grace,
a kind of being in the world spontaneously, with *grace.*

Weightfully upon me was the world.
Weightfully this self which graced the world yet never wholly itself.
Weightfully this self which weighed upon me,
the release from which is what I desire and what I achieve.
And the girl remembers, in this infinite instant already so many times divided,
the sadness she felt once, hardly knowing she felt it, to merely inhabit herself.
Yes, the girl falls, absurd to fall, even the earth with its compulsion to take unto itself all that falls
must know that falling is absurd, yet the girl falling isn't myself,
or she is myself, but a self I took of my own volition unto myself.
Forever. With grace. *This happened.*

—*C. K. Williams*

even rich people have trouble with them. Then you look at the herbal stuff. It's a completely different scene. The message is friendly. It's cheap, it's easy, so already that makes you feel better. People see these herbs that have been around for thousands of years, and they think these things are natural. They wonder how could they possibly be bad?"

Nearly thirty years after Richard Nixon began America's war on cancer, the rate of new cancers in the United States started to fall in the nineties—owing largely, it appears, to the emphasis placed on prevention and education. Yet at least a million Americans will be diagnosed with cancer this year, and about half as many will die of the disease. Cancer statistics are often difficult to evaluate, but so is the evidence of therapeutic success. The "cure rate," discussed in many studies, for example, measures whether a patient has survived for five years. If a person lives one day longer, the National Cancer Institute could consider him cured. "A lot of people happen to die in the sixth year," Gonzalez said. "Ask their families if they were cured."

Treatment with surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy often succeeds, but even the most optimistic cancer specialists would agree with Gonzalez that once a tumor has spread beyond its original site it becomes hard to extend life or to improve it; gemcitabine, for example, which is costly and debilitating, increases the life expectancy of a pancreatic-cancer patient from four and a half months to 5.7 months. Yet it is offered routinely because no physician likes to feel helpless. Still, even in those cases, like pancreatic cancer, where progress has been limited, oncologists tend to put their faith in molecular biology rather than in Gonzalez's treatment.

"I have been involved in the management of, I guess, twenty-five hundred people with pancreatic cancer over the past twenty-five years," Murray Brennan told me when I went to see him in his office at Sloan-Kettering, where he is chairman of the department of surgery. Brennan, a sixty-year-old New Zealander, has taught at Cornell medical school for nineteen years, and in 1983 Nicholas Gonzalez was among his many students.

"I admire Gonzalez's commitment," Brennan continued, "and God knows we don't have all the answers. But I have never seen anybody's tumor respond to pancreatic enzymes. *Not one time.* So I welcome this trial. If he has something we have overlooked, it would be thrilling. But when people talk about his 'success' I wonder what they mean, because as far as I can tell it is based on ten or eleven people. I don't mean to be unkind or unfair, but ten people is not enough to change the way a nation does business."

"At some point, the idea that you would take a knife and cut someone in half will be seen as truly barbaric," Brennan went on. "That is obviously one of the reasons the alternative movement flourishes. But there is something else going on. Every day, my patients pick up the newspaper, and they are told that we are on the precipice of curing all medical afflictions faced by mankind—that the human genome will do it, or that something a person tried in a lab might end cancer in five years. In two generations, or ten, those miracles may come true. The problem is I am living now, and now it turns out that surgery saves the lives of more cancer patients than anything else by far. Advocates don't always accept this, but I am afraid we are doing the best we can."

Murray Brennan is a carefully spoken, if blunt, man, but he stumbled over the word "advocates." Activists for specific diseases from AIDS to Alzheimer's have placed illness prominently on the political agenda. When it comes to determining the direction of scientific research, a congressional hearing has become as important as anything that might show up in a test tube. As a cause of death, AIDS ranked seventeenth last year in the United States, yet it received more money per patient from the N.I.H.—a total of two billion dollars—than any other illness. There are defensible reasons for that; the research needed to understand how such a complex virus insinuates itself into the machinery of the immune system has already proved valuable, and will almost certainly be used in ways that cannot be predicted. If not for a powerful lobbying organization, however, that much money would never have been allocated for AIDS.

Representative Dan Burton, an Indiana Republican who has supported

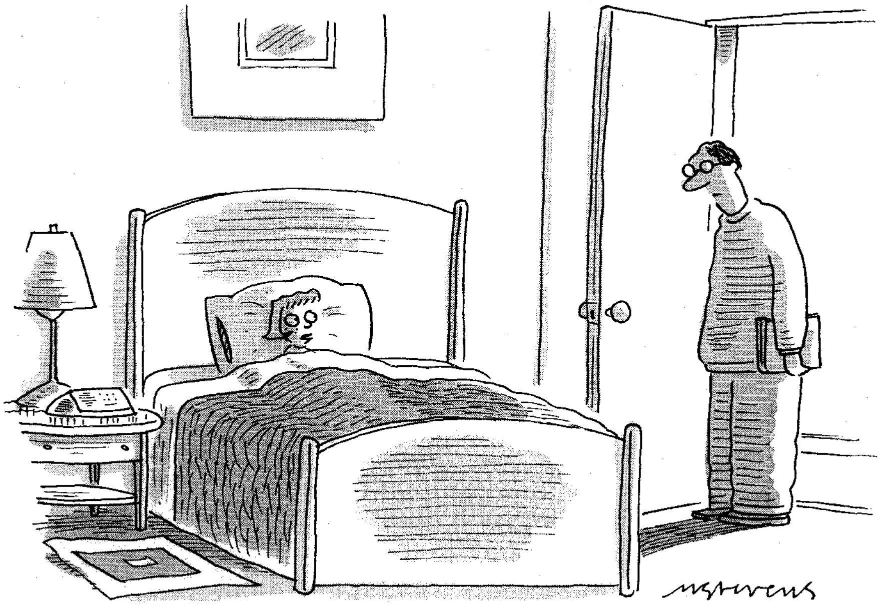
Gonzalez, regularly attacks federal researchers for not being more sympathetic to the use of popular, unproven remedies. (He also argues, with no reasonable evidence, that vaccinations may do more harm than good.) Testifying before Burton's Committee on Government Reform has become a painful ritual for the nation's senior scientists, who are often forced to explain why lengthy drug trials make sense. Under the rules of science, new substances need to be compared with standard therapies, and that can take years. Once something is on the market, however, testing becomes immensely more complicated. How do you assess the value of supplements, like valerian or Cat's Claw, that millions of Americans take every day? With so many people using ephedra or saw palmetto, not to mention combining more common supplements like Vitamin C and Vitamin E in ways that may have unexpected side effects, it may no longer always be possible to proceed as deliberately as many scientists would prefer.

Such concerns are constantly on the minds of the officials at Columbia University who have agreed to sponsor the Gonzalez trial, and the debates there about it were intense. Some researchers, deeply reluctant to move forward with the project, argued that the very participation of such a prestigious medical center would send a profound, and perhaps unwanted, message about the direction of federal cancer research in America.

The prospect clearly worries Karen Antman, the chief of Columbia's division of medical oncology. As a past president of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, Antman is a pillar of the American cancer establishment that Nicholas Gonzalez finds so unsympathetic. Yet she concedes the need for trials like his. "If half my patients are taking something different from what I prescribe, I'd better know what it does," she told me as we talked in her office, which looks out upon the George Washington Bridge from the Milstein Pavilion, at Columbia Presbyterian. "I can like it or not, but people talk about the costs of doing this sort of trial. They never seem to discuss the costs associated with not doing this kind of study, however. If you think about how many people are using these remedies in ways we don't understand, then it doesn't cost that much at all."

Antman simply wants to be able to offer coherent advice to patients. "They tell me what herbs they are taking, and I want to be able to put a slide on the wall and show them what those pills might do," she said. "I worry very much that the fact that we are doing this trial will put a university imprimatur on the Gonzalez regime, and that patients will assume that means Columbia supports this treatment. We do not." At that point, she got up, went to her desk, and ripped a page from the instructions that Columbia gives patients interested in the Gonzalez study. "Here," she said. "This says it better than I do":

> Many Americans who develop advanced cancer for which standard treatments have little to offer, turn to alternative or complementary therapies. . . . There is no current conventional medical support for the theories and assumptions underlying the use of Nutritional Therapy. The Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons does not support its use except as part of a properly conducted clinical trial.



"That's O.K., Dad. I think I'll go with the ambient waterfall sounds tonight."

I asked if it would be right to infer that she thought the trial wouldn't work. She shook her head. I asked if she had an idea why it might work. She said no. Did she have any opinions at all about the potential of nutritional therapy or the Gonzalez regime? "I have lots of opinions," she told me, "but none of them matter."

In early October, Gonzalez told his story to nineteen members of the White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Policy, which was appointed by President Clinton in an attempt to integrate alternative therapies more coherently into the mainstream of American medicine. "I want to erase this silly dividing line between alternative and orthodox medicine," James S. Gordon, a psychiatrist who heads the commission, told me. "We need to help people broaden their vision of what health can be." It's a task that Gordon, who speaks with the type of voice one finds on relaxation tapes, has been working on for twenty years, both at the Center for Mind-Body Medicine, in Washington, D.C., which he runs, and as a professor at Georgetown University medical school. Gordon traces his commitment to alternative medicine back to the early nineteen-seventies, when he injured his back in a yoga routine and found conventional physicians unable to help him.

Gonzalez spoke at the end of a long day in which the commission took testimony from senior officials at the N.I.H., as well as from professors, industry representatives, and beleaguered employees of the F.D.A. He strolled to the dais as darkness fell, and only a few people remained in the audience, at the Humphrey Building. Yet there he was: a man who had been shunned by colleagues, attacked as a fraud, and nearly arrested for ignoring standard medical practices was speaking from the headquarters of America's health establishment. Moreover, he was sharing a platform with Stephen Straus, a highly respected researcher who had been drafted two years ago to take over the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine and to apply some scientific rigor to its work.

Jim Gordon had been eager to take Gonzalez's testimony because, as he told me before the meeting, "Nick is the state of the art. His therapy is promising, he is not afraid to test it rigorously, and he is aware of the stakes." So, by the way, is Gordon. In his psychiatric practice, he refuses to prescribe antidepressants to patients, insisting that America is overmedicated and that most such pills merely numb symptoms. Gordon sponsors the most important alternative-medical meeting in America each year, the Comprehensive Cancer Care conference. It began in 1998 as something of a fringe event where Gonzalez was a marquee attraction, and where tapes of his presentations sold as if they were bootlegs by Bob Dylan. Last year, however, partly in self-defense, many well-known "orthodox" cancer specialists attended the Gordon conference, and the National Cancer Institute decided to sponsor it. "I cannot begin to explain the change in attitude such a decision reflects," Gordon said.

Because the hour was late, Gonzalez raced through his story, sounding at times like a record played at the wrong speed: medical school, Kelley's teachings, his belief in pancreatic enzymes, the various types of diets, and, finally, the persecution he believes he has experienced. He recounted his worst day, in 1993, when he heard that the New York medical board was trying to suspend his license. "I was in Switzerland, presenting my data to Dr. Pierre Guesry and his colleagues," Gonzalez said. Guesry, a former medical director of the Pasteur Institute, had become vice-president of research for Nestlé, and he sponsored the pancreatic-cancer pilot study. "I got a call from my secretary to tell me they were trying to lift my license. There I was, in Switzerland, talking as a colleague to the world's most respected scientists. At home, though, I was seen as human pond scum."

"This first-quarter projected-earnings report—does it make my butt look big?"

• •

Now, at the hearing, the questions were filled only with respect. Nobody asked about hair tests, or how pancreatic enzymes actually kill cancer cells. None of Gonzalez's past legal problems were mentioned, nor was there any discussion of the ethics of treating people for cancer with a regimen that has never been shown to help them. The coffee enemas were not discussed, nor Gonzalez's belief that William Donald Kelley is one of the most improperly maligned physicians in history. The conversation also never addressed another curious fact: why no conventional researchers seem capable of achieving results with Gonzalez's techniques. One commissioner was even disgusted that Gonzalez felt he had to rely on the scientific method at all.

Later, in New York, Gonzalez didn't know what to make of the experience. He finds the medical establishment unrelentingly arrogant, but he has no genuine faith in the alternative, either. "Sometimes I think the weirdos are taking over," he said. I told him that I had been leafing through alternative-health magazines and had seen an advertisement for the Edelson clinic, in Atlanta, which claims to offer the Gonzalez program. The ad says that the director of the clinic, Stephen B. Edelson, is, among other things, a professor of environmental medicine at a university in Kazakhstan.

"I don't even know that man," Gonzalez said. "I have never had a conversation with him. As much as people criticize orthodox doctors who act like there is a magic bullet, alternative people are fifty times worse. These esoteric publications always have articles about some nutrient with no control in some cells in a special cell line in Austria that if the moon is in the right position you get a tumor response in cell culture. And then suddenly it's on the Internet. . . . That's medicine today, that's our world, and God help me if I am a part of it."

Gonzalez said he was "very saddened" to find himself on the fringes of medicine, and that he still dreams that his exile will end. "I'm really not much of a revolutionary," he said. "I wear only blue and gray pinstripes. The greatest sadness in my life—other than my marriage, to Linda, which didn't work—is that I have been forced to work outside the academic mainstream. My greatest pleasure would be to return to Cornell and the Sloan-Kettering world. That's always where I have wanted to be. That has not changed. I don't think it ever will." ♦

PROFILES

THE BOOK EATER

Michael Zinman, obsessive bibliophile, and the critical-mess theory of collecting.

BY MARK SINGER

While amusing himself at an antiques fair in Rhinebeck, New York, one day a few years ago, Michael Zinman, a sixty-three-year-old polymath who has acquired an international reputation for his prolific and idiosyncratic habits as a book collector, came across a large plywood heavy-jowled caricature of Richard Nixon. For Zinman—whose day job is buying and selling, in a market understood by himself and very few other people, enormous natural-gas turbines—seeing the ex-President's oversized red-and-white painted mug was, he says, "like an epiphany." Epiphany du jour seems more like it. The next morning, having invested a hundred dollars in this curio, he nailed it to the front of a weathered cedar two-story office building he owns on one of the main avenues of Ardsley, a suburb about forty minutes north of New York City. The political establishment there is mainstream Republican, and two days later a village official dropped by to inform him that he was in violation of the local sign code. "It ain't a sign," Zinman replied—the previous owner had in fact used it as a basketball backboard. "An omen, maybe, but not a sign." Nevertheless, he was told, proper procedures hadn't been followed, and it would have to come down. "You want me to take it down?" Zinman baited his visitor. "Go ahead and issue me a summons. And you'll be reading about this in the *Times* by the end of the week." The official departed, and not long thereafter a cohort of his came around and suggested that the presence of the Nixon head could complicate a zoning proposal Zinman was preparing to submit to the village planning board. Zinman blithely made an allusion to the potential pleasures of litigation. Since then, the Nixon head has stayed put, and its owner has occupied himself with other self-gratifying endeavors. This vignette offers a concise illustration of the Zinman rules of engagement: obey your whims, inflict no physical harm but get in the other guy's face as much as circumstances dictate, and be poised for the next skirmish.

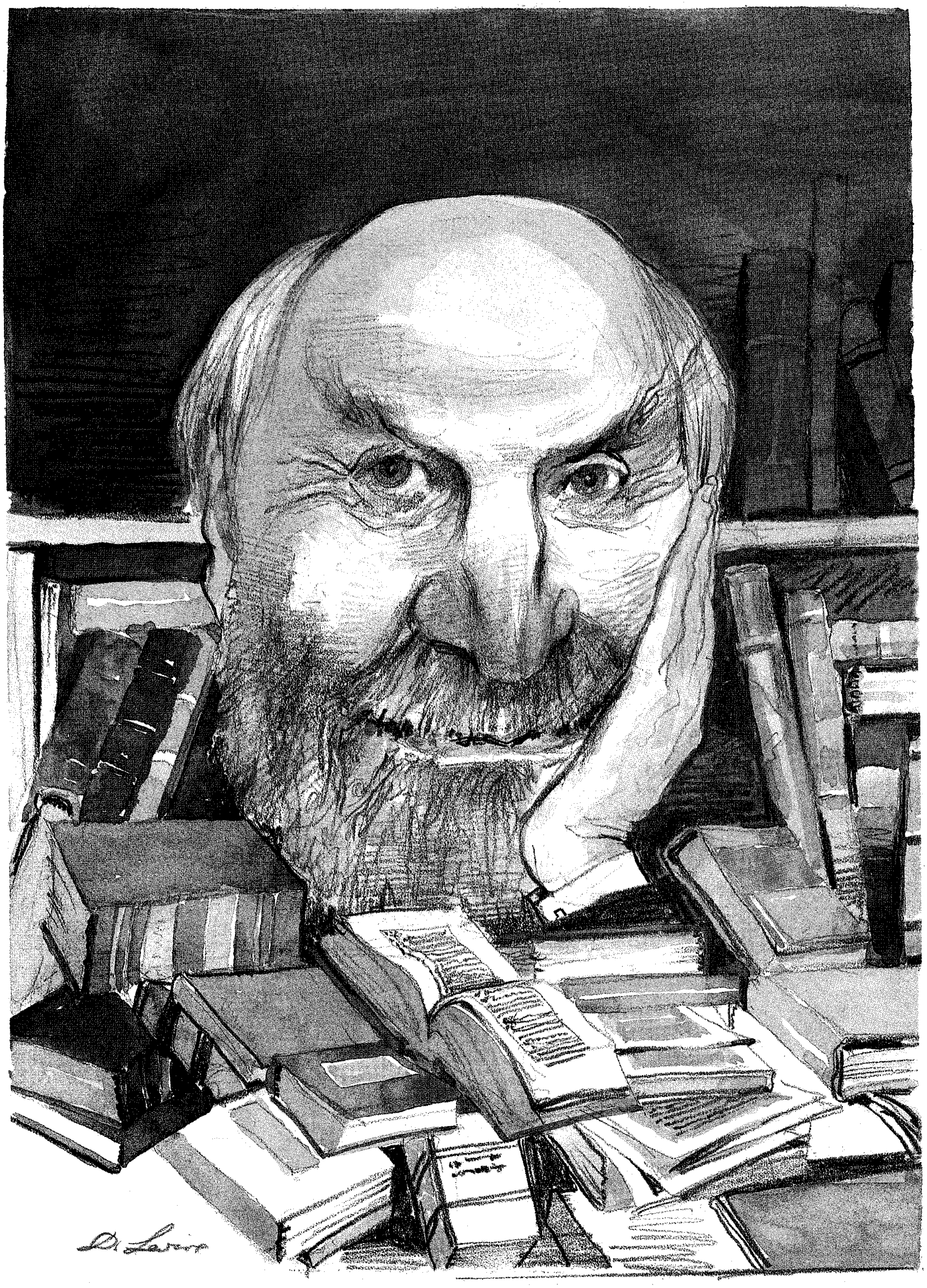
Zinman has a nimble verbal manner, a cheerful seen-it-all-but-show-me-some-more bluntness, infused with a nasal Yonkers inflection, and a look that would have engaged Daumier—elfin, slightly paunchy, bemused. His red hair has mostly gone white and there's not much left on top, and he has a pink complexion, a neatly trimmed beard, hazel eyes, and a consistent air of benign, sage alertness. When I first visited his office, more than a dozen years ago, at the outset of our friendly acquaintanceship, a sublime oil painting of a grizzly bear by J. J. Audubon greeted me—one of nine Audubon quadruped originals that Zinman has at one time or another owned, and all of which he has since parted with. The grizzly loomed over a large maple partners' desk from which Zinman carried out his duties as chief executive of Earthworm Tractor Company, a firm that traded heavy earthmoving equipment. After conducting some quick business over the phone—arranging for a Caterpillar dealer in the Pacific Northwest to acquire a winch that Zinman happened to know was situated on the lot of a Caterpillar dealer in New York, a conversation that netted him about a thousand dollars a minute—he ushered me next door to show me a collection in progress of books that appealed to him for their titles alone: "Frog Raising for Pleasure and Profit," "Pamphlets by an Ass," "How to Be Happy Though Married," "The Cult of the Goldfish," "Colon Cleanse the Easy Way!," "Hell: What Is It? Who Are They? Can They Get Out?," "The Truth About Baking Powder." Not far from the bizarre-titles collection was a bookcase containing several hundred thousand dollars' worth of fragments, plus many intact volumes, of Early American Bibles. Such odd juxtapositions, along with a decorating motif that inclined toward high-low eclecticism and clutter—a not quite life-size carved wooden pig posed next to an uninviting brown cotton upholstered sofa, above which hung a brass plaque engraved "When You've Got Them by the Balls Their Hearts and Minds Will Follow"—struck me as a fitting analogue to Zinman's peripatetic intelligence.

When I began dropping by again recently, the ambience was unchanged. Shelves and storage rooms throughout the building were burdened with tons of books. In the place of the Audubon bear, Zinman had mounted four framed business documents, mementos of financial calamities he's been a party to—each being a complex long-term investment and thus a deviation from his proven talent for, as he puts it, "trading on my own instincts."

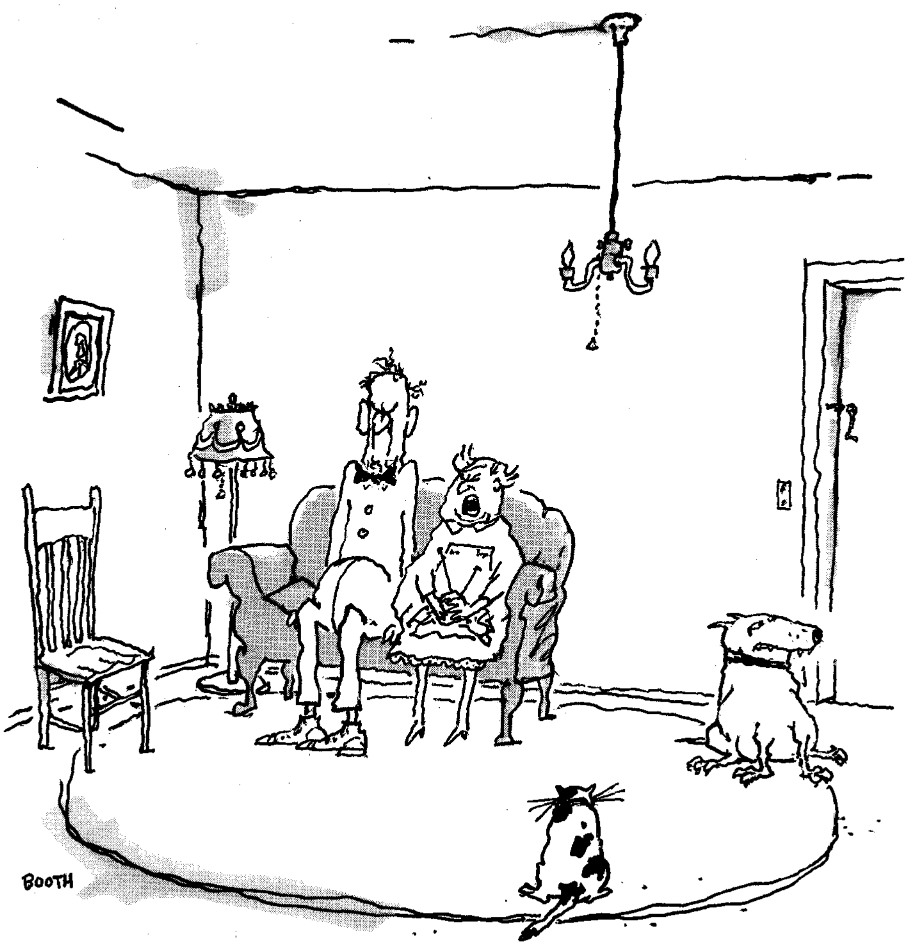
"Every time I think I'm smart," he told me, "those four relics are my lesson in humility. The point being that virtually every undertaking that is not transactional in nature—anything that doesn't primarily involve buying and selling or brokering—I've been singularly unsuccessful at." These vicissitudes notwithstanding, Zinman's trading instincts have over time kept him liquid and, remarkably, have supported his insatiable fervor as a collector. And, within the past year, one transaction in particular has affirmed his dominance of a certain niche of the rare-book market. In the process, the improbable wisdom of his unorthodox methods has been permanently vindicated.

In 1958, at the age of twenty-one, Zinman made what he considers his first serious book purchase, spending two hundred dollars for a three-volume octavo edition of Audubon's

DAVID LEVINE



At certain shops, Zinman was welcomed as a one-man swarm of locusts—relentless, contrarian, gluttonous.



"Forty-one years of marriage. That's a long, long, long learning curve."

"Quadrupeds of North America." The rest of the world's preference for Audubon birds was precisely what attracted him to the quadrupeds—"because no one liked the furry little creatures." He paid for the books at the rate of ten dollars a week, and the day he made the last payment he bought another Audubon work, again on the installment plan.

At that point in his life, he'd already matriculated at Cornell and at New York University, in both cases departing without a diploma. Given the chance, he would have graduated from Cornell, but he became persona non grata after he and a confederate, on the eve of an alumni reunion weekend, orchestrated the theft of all the toilet seats from six dormitories. He dropped out of N.Y.U. because his father asked him to join his merchant trading company. This enterprise was the precursor of Earthworm, which enjoyed twenty generally prosperous years, culminating in Zinman's decision, in the mid-eighties, to sell shares to the public. As founder, he retained about twenty per cent of the stock, which in time became worthless. First came the dubious decision to import excavators from Russia. ("They just didn't work. We had a lot of press, and the biggest contractor in D.C. bought one of our machines and the thing kept breaking down. Why didn't we see that coming? We were stupid.") Next, he imported tractors from China, with similar results. ("Why? We didn't learn our lesson after Russia.") I once asked Zinman whether his book collecting had got in the way of managing Earthworm, and he said, "No, it was the other way around."

Over two decades, he progressed from Audubon to natural history in general, then to American natural history, then to voyages to and travels in the New World (with special reference to natural history). During this odyssey, his enthusiasm endeared him to a network of book dealers who tended to cluster in New England, New York, Philadelphia, and London. Impassioned book collectors are driven by, among other things, the conviction that book dealers usually don't realize the extent of the treasures squirrelled away in their own inventories. As the focus of Zinman's collecting evolved, he often sold books in one corner of a shop and then spent hours scouring the premises, walking out with a lot more baggage than he'd just deaccessioned. At certain London shops, Zinman was welcomed as a one-man swarm of locusts—relentless, contrarian, gluttonous. He'd work his way through the basement stocks—the so-called "hospitals," where "crippled," or incomplete, books were consigned—of several dealers: Bernard Quaritch, Francis Edwards, Pickering & Chatto, Maggs Brothers. The consensus at Quaritch, which has been around since 1847, is that in terms of numbers of imperfect volumes bought Zinman is the most active customer in the company's history. (He was surely among the least self-restrained. In London, Zinman made a habit of staying at the Savoy Hotel and of not overexerting himself fretting about the house protocols. Once, when a staff member reminded him that gentlemen were required to wear jackets and ties in the Savoy parlor, Zinman apologized for his faux pas, retreated to his room, and returned wearing a jacket and tie but not a shirt.)

Zinman's omnivorousness made it inevitable that he would come across examples of Early American printing—a category comprising what was produced from 1639, the year the first mechanical press showed up on the Atlantic shores, through 1800. This is the same span of time surveyed by the ur-text "American Bibliography," a reference work whose primary author, Charles Evans, labored more than thirty years, completing twelve volumes before his death, in 1935. Evans identified forty thousand individual items—books, pamphlets, chapbooks, broadsides, magazines, newspapers—of which ten per cent were "ghosts," known to have once existed but evidently no longer extant.

Updatings of Evans subsequently added fourteen thousand or so items. The largest holding of such material, at the American Antiquarian Society, in Worcester, Massachusetts, consists of twenty-two thousand items. When Zinman first started acquiring Evans items, conventional wisdom held that there simply weren't enough of them loose in the market for him to build a substantial, much less a definitive, collection. So, naturally, whenever an opportunity arose he bought. And the more he bought the more he wanted to buy. Over the past twenty years, Zinman has sought and, with infrequent exceptions, bought anything—*anything*—printed in the American Colonies.

One sunny day late last winter, as a blue Plymouth Voyager van inched its way up a ramp of the Cross Bronx Expressway and onto the George Washington Bridge, the driver, a New Haven book dealer named William Reese, and his front-seat passenger, Zinman—on their way to Philadelphia, with me riding in the back seat—noticed the same thing at the same moment.

"I assume you want to buy that," Reese said, and Zinman immediately replied, "Of *course* I want to buy it." A minute later, the van had drawn even with a panhandler who was standing on the narrow shoulder of the ramp, holding a rectangular piece of cardboard on which he'd written, "Homeless Hungry God-Bless." Reese rolled down his window, and Zinman shouted across a lane of traffic, "I'll buy your sign for twenty dollars!" The panhandler, rheumy-eyed, with stringy reddish-brown hair and a beard, studied his handiwork as if maybe something about it had eluded him. Nope, it was just a cardboard sign.

"You got it," he said, approaching the van.

"You have to sign your name on the back of it," Zinman said.

"Are you serious?"

"I'm serious."

"My real name? My name's Wayne."

"Here's twenty bucks."

"I'm not gonna ask what you're gonna do with it."

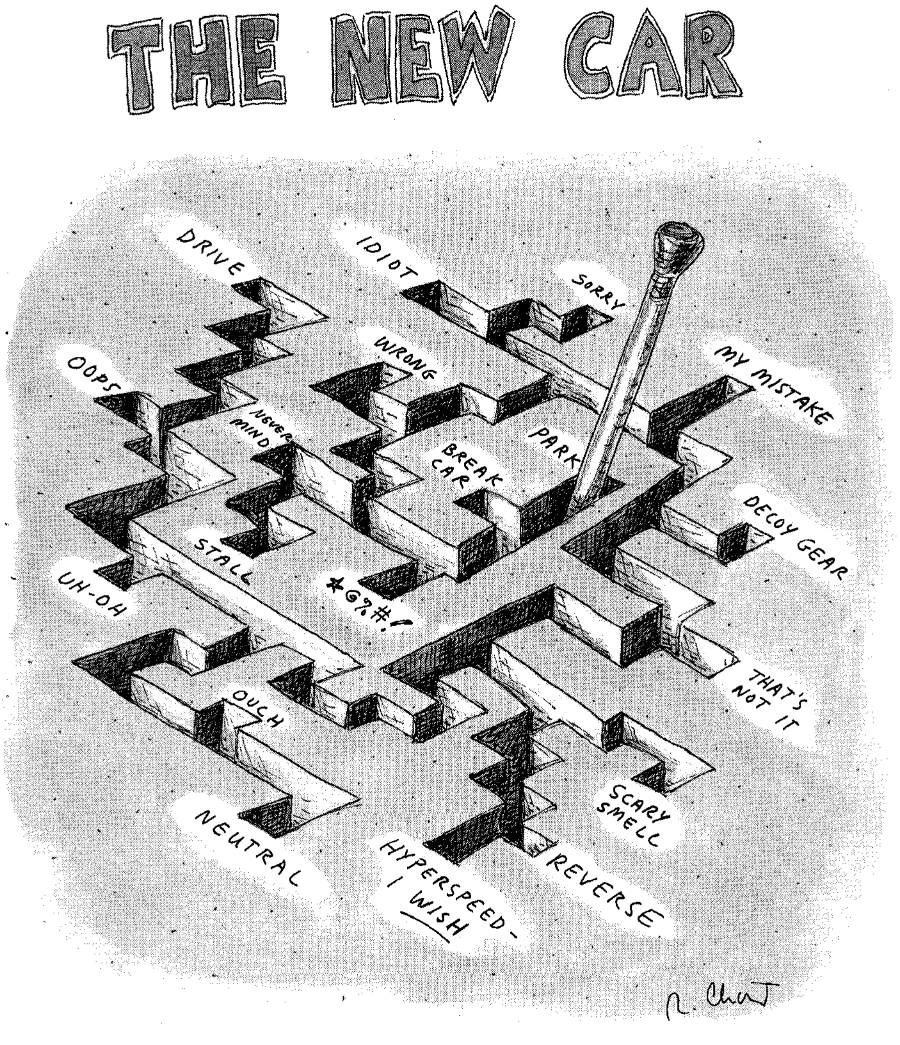
"I'm giving it to a library."

"You made my day!" Wayne said, then headed down the ramp and hopped over a railing, quite possibly planning to take the afternoon off.

"I'm putting the word out all over the country," Zinman said as the traffic moved forward. "I want signs like this. You'd be surprised. Some people are very sincere in saying these things are important to them and they can't part with them. That's fine. How many do I have so far? I have four—well, now five. I'm just getting started."

"It's a new collection that stores flat," Reese said, and then, gesturing toward the cargo area of the van and a Ryder rental truck that was following us, he added, "Michael's got to get rid of this shit first."

The shit: the supposedly impossibly elusive stuff he'd begun vacuuming up twenty years earlier, now known as the Zinman Collection of Early American Imprints, valued at eight million dollars, which that day was being transported from Ardsley to the home of its new owner, the Library Company of Philadelphia. As we proceeded along the New Jersey Turnpike, Zinman and Reese, who had acted as his agent in negotiations with the Library Company, explored a topic dear to both of them—what they refer to as the "critical-mess theory" of collecting. Reese, an affable and droll fellow in his mid-forties, started out in the book trade in 1975. His own collecting specialties are Melville and American color-plate books, but his main distinction is that through a combination of entrepreneurial ingenuity and scholarly discipline he has established himself as the country's preëminent dealer in Americana. In 1998, the Morgan Library expressed interest in buying the Zinman Collection, and Reese and a pair of assistants spent six weeks preparing an item-by-item appraisal. Most of what Reese scrutinized during that exercise was already familiar to him; he either had sold it to Zinman himself or had bid



for him at auction or had heard Zinman expatiate upon it during their almost daily phone conversations. Discussions with the Morgan never got very far, but a by-product of Reese's appraisal was "100 Exemplars from the Zinman Collection," a prospectus of sorts that would prove handy whenever the next potential buyer came along. In a prefatory note, Reese wrote, "Zinman's primary concern as a collector has been the assembling of the physical evidence of printing in early America, in as broad a range of subjects as possible. The result is a collection almost without equal for the study of the history of the book in America." When Zinman lent me his annotated copy of "100 Exemplars," I wasn't surprised to find that the marginalia read like the bibliomaniacal equivalent of a diary of amorous pursuits, the reminiscences of a protagonist in a state of perpetual satyriasis.

"The most intriguing thing is how a collection like Michael's gets built," Reese said, by way of explaining the practical ramifications of the critical-mess theory. "When you start on something like this, you say, O.K., here is a genre, here is a field. And I'm just going to buy it, whatever it is that I'm collecting—signs from homeless people, imprints from before 1801. You don't start off with a theory about what you're trying to do. You don't begin by saying, 'I'm trying to prove x.' You build a big pile. Once you get a big enough pile together—the critical mess—you're able to draw conclusions about it. You see patterns. You might see that this one lithographer in Philadelphia does all the scientific works. You start to see that certain early printers were much better than other printers. You start to see that homeless people in the South put together wordier signs than people in the North because people in the South like to read billboards, so they'll slow down and read the sign. People who have the greatest intuitive feel for physical objects start from a relationship with the objects and then acquire the scholarship, instead of the other way around. The way to become a connoisseur is to work in the entire spectrum of what's available—from utter crap to fabulous stuff. If you're going to spend your time looking only at the best, you're not going to have a critical eye.

"Michael went about this by crawling around book fairs and antique shows and going to see crackpots in the country and bartering and using any number of Zinmanesque devices. Certain institutions collected Early American imprints during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but then a time came when they no longer had the money to do it. From 1920 on—until Michael got active, in the early eighties—hardly anyone paid attention to this stuff. He started out just picking up all the float, whatever was in the market. After that, stuff started coming out of attics and estate sales. And that's the amazing thing—that, at a point when everybody said you can't form a collection on this scale because it's all in institutions already, he went ahead and did it. And now nobody can ever do it again."

"Zinman's determined to a fault," a New England book scout named Matthew Needle told me. "He'll call people day and night. He won't browbeat them necessarily, but he has a way. He starts a conversation: 'What'd you buy yesterday? What have you got for me?' Social niceties were never his strong suit."

Steve Weissman, formerly a book dealer in New York, now living in England: "Michael has persistence, but he doesn't have patience. Voracity is a kind of impatient quality. He's incapable of waiting even for a nice copy. But he knows it when he sees it."

Near Trenton, Zinman was reminded of an emblematic transaction, an encounter with a dealer from New Jersey who had brought to a book fair "a very nice seventeenth-century Mather item"—specifically, a 1684 sermon by Nathanael Mather on the obligation of Christian believers "to live in the constant exercise of grace." Bracing himself for disappointment, the dealer told Zinman he assumed that he already had a copy. "So I look at it," Zinman recalled. "And I say, 'Actually, I've got two copies.' He says, 'I guess you don't want it.' I say, 'Of course I want it. Then I'll have three.' " His collection included three complete copies, four substantially complete copies, and about a dozen fragmentary copies of Increase Mather's "Kometographia" (1683), one of the first scientific works published in America. Also: five copies of William Hubbard's "A Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New England" (1677); seven copies of "Wisdom in Miniature; or, The Young Gentleman and Lady's Pleasing Instructor" (1796); five copies of Nathaniel Morton's "New England's Memoriall," the first history book printed in the colonies (1669); eight copies of Timothy Dwight's "The Conquest of Canäan: A Poem, in Eleven Books" (1785). On one of the few occasions when he sold a book "because I needed cash, a book I would not have parted with otherwise," it was John Smith's "The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles." Distressing though it was to separate himself from

"Say—do we really want to bury this Armani necktie?"

the book, Zinman drew consolation from the fact that he still owned thirty-three copies.

"I always thought Laura's interest in kick-boxing was purely recreational."

So how was it he'd agreed to relinquish, en masse, his Early American imprints? Nicholas Poole-Wilson, the managing director of Quaritch, told me he figured that Zinman, having entered "the late afternoon of his life," wanted to make arrangements for his worldly possessions. If he'd been describing a sixty-three-year-old other than Zinman—whose mother, at ninety-seven, is alive and kicking, though not quite as high as she did when she was a Ziegfeld chorus girl—I might have found this plausible. The chief reason was quite mundane. He and his wife, Barbara Weingarten, had decided they wanted to move from the suburbs to Manhattan, and he was having trouble finding a co-op apartment in a building where his joist-threatening library would be welcome. In other words, he wasn't selling because he was strapped for funds. Though eight million dollars was a fair market appraisal, the Library Company was paying only five million; the three-million-dollar difference was a gift from Zinman. And even as he was surrendering the collection he was adding to it.

"He bought a book from me last week," Reese interjected.

"Yeah, for ten grand. And I'll give it to them. I've been giving stuff to the Library Company for the last fifteen or twenty years, and I have absolutely no intention of stopping. I give books to a lot of people. I really don't have a possessive instinct. I don't have to *own* anything. I do have an acquisitive instinct, but once I've acquired it I'll give it away. I've been asked what kind of trauma am I going through because I'm giving up this collection. I'll tell you something: if I am, it's news to me. Sure, you mess around with the books and they're wonderful. But it's, you know, like revisiting old girlfriends."

The Library Company's pedigree—Benjamin Franklin and friends founded it in 1731, originally as a subscription lending library—destined it to become the august American-history research facility it is today. Its archives of printed materials and manuscripts focus mainly on the Colonial period through the late nineteenth century, with particular strengths in the Revolutionary, Federal, Jacksonian, and Civil War periods. The fact that its Early American imprints were skewed toward the Middle Atlantic region, while Zinman himself had gathered an inordinate amount of New England material, meant that the combined holdings would dovetail neatly. Thanks in large part to Zinman's obsessiveness, in both quantity and quality, the Library Company is now second only to the American Antiquarian Society as a repository of early imprints.

When we arrived—the Library Company owns a pair of red brick buildings on Locust Street in downtown Philadelphia—a delegation of board members and employees was on hand not only to hail Zinman but to unburden him. Carefully and efficiently, the contents of Reese's van and the rental truck were unloaded and stacked in the trustees' room, on the ground floor—two hundred and thirty-one banker boxes filled with books, pamphlets, broadsides, medical and scientific texts, sermons, almanacs, psalters, Bibles, atlases, magazines, poetry, fiction, commercial catalogues, state constitutions, city directories, sheet music, children's literature. The items were in eight languages, including the Massachusetts dialect of the Algonquin Nation, and among them were the earliest work of fiction by an American (1715); the first modern novel published in America (1767); the first American sporting book, a sermon on the pleasures of fishing (1743); the first arithmetic book published in America (1719); Cotton Mather's account of the Salem witch trials (1692); a 1729 printing of "The Bay Psalm Book," the original edition of which, in 1640, was *the* first book printed in the American Colonies; the only Colonial-era book identified as having belonged to a slave (1741, inscribed "Lucinda her Book given by her Mistress"); ten editions of Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" (1776); multiple editions of the Journals of the Continental Congress; the first American edition of "Paradise Lost" (1777); a perfect 1783 copy of "The New England Primer," the most famous Colonial schoolbook; the most complete known copy of Jacob Taylor's "Tenebrae," the earliest illustrated scientific book (1698); a 1794 memoir of Marie Antoinette, printed in New York, that made her out to be a low-rent floozy; Charles Perrault's "Fairy Tales" (1794), among the rarest of American children's books, complete except for the title page; "The Indian's Pedigree" (1794), a racist broadside printed in Boston; the first American edition of a Shakespeare play ("Hamlet," 1794); "Aristotle's Masterpiece," the first American sex manual (1766); and a frayed but unique copy of a 1770 broadside poem by Phillis Wheatley, a slave woman who became a celebrated literary figure. The Wheatley broadside was sold by Reese to Zinman for fifteen thousand dollars at a book fair in New York on a day when the object in question changed hands two times before Zinman arrived. That it wound up with him surprised no one.

When the delivery was completed, Zinman and Reese broke for lunch, along with some members of the Library Company board and James Green, who is the associate librarian and someone Zinman has consulted several times a week for the past fifteen years on the topic of Early American imprints. En route to the felicitously named Bookbinder's, a seafood restaurant, Zinman stooped three times to pick up objects he spied on the pavement. A couple of hours later, during the drive home, he reported, "It wasn't a bad day at all. I found two pennies and a marble." Then, when we were about fourth in line at a toll booth, he announced, "You usually find money here," and jumped out of the car.

"We ought to leave him," Reese muttered.

"There's a lot out there," Zinman said when he returned, having increased his net worth by more than a dollar. "To quote Franklin, 'Waste not, want not.' "

"No, Michael," Reese corrected him. "What Franklin actually said was 'A dime found near a toll booth is a dime earned.' "

"These toll collectors start getting mad, so I leave some for the next guys. You know, this is easy, not like when you're walking in New York on a hot day and you've got to use a knife to pry pennies out of the tar and then you've got to go find a newspaper in the garbage to wrap them up so the tar doesn't stick to your pocket—now, that's a problem."

Assuming that he'd developed a system for cataloguing what he scavenged, I asked, "What do you do, write down where and when you found it and then file it away in a specimen box?"

"Are you kidding? I spend it!"

When the spirit moves him, Zinman is willing to squander financial opportunities. While he was confident, for instance, that the John Carter Brown Library, of Providence, would ultimately have offered more for his Americana collection, he nevertheless went ahead and sold it to the Library Company. This attitude—it's only money, isn't it?—was evident in his dealings with Donald Oresman, a New York lawyer who sits on the Library Company's board. After he and Reese had agreed on the price, Oresman told me, he called Zinman for the name of his lawyer so they could draft a contract. "You write the contract," Zinman proposed. When Oresman inquired how and when he wanted the five million dollars delivered, Zinman said how about a million a year for five years. What rate of interest, Oresman asked, should the Library Company pay on the balance due? Zinman: "Forget the interest."

This was consonant with Zinman's track record as a capricious philanthropist. During the seventies, feeling oppressed by the nonexistence of live classical music on the radio, he arranged to sponsor one-hour broadcasts five nights a week, beginning at midnight, on WQXR, the FM station owned by the *Times*. In the course of this, he created a charitable entity, the Haydn Foundation, to function as the formal underwriter. (The various ways in which Zinman has deployed the Haydn Foundation in the intervening years have prompted Clarence Wolf, a Philadelphia book dealer and a close friend, to refer to it on occasion as the Hiding Foundation.) Occasionally, Zinman took the role of on-air host. At one point, he got a phone call from a fledgling enterprise called National Public Radio. Zinman: "They said, 'Hey, Zinman, we're setting up this nationwide radio network and we think you've got the greatest thing since chopped liver! No one else is producing any live music in the country. You're putting on two hundred and fifty concerts a year. We want you on NPR.' To which I rejoined, 'Are you kidding? I'm already on QXR! Who the hell are you?' "

A different sort of missed opportunity occurred several years ago when New York University Medical Center solicited a major donation. Zinman offered to endow urinals, at a thousand dollars apiece, provided each was equipped with a plaque that read, "The pleasure you are now experiencing has been made possible through the generosity of Michael Zinman." The hospital fund-raisers vacillated before declining, and Zinman said fine, but if you change your minds the offer stands. "They came back to me later and said, 'Here's the problem: What about women?' I said, 'You want to put urinals in the ladies' rooms, too? No problem.' "

The apparent relish with which Zinman dispenses his largesse—the joy of giving, compounded by the joy of tax-deductibility—is at odds with a tendency that for a long time characterized his affairs both in and out of the book trade. "I love Michael," Clarence Wolf has said. "He's the least petty person I know. But he can be as exasperating as anyone I've ever dealt with." This was an oblique reference to the fact that for years Zinman was notorious not as a flat-out deadbeat but as someone who paid his bills *very slowly*.

Steve Weissman: "He'd buy from little dealers, from big dealers, and he tended to pay the ones who needed the money and make the ones who didn't wait a long time. I don't think he ever took advantage of anybody who really needed the money. In the end, it always came out all right."

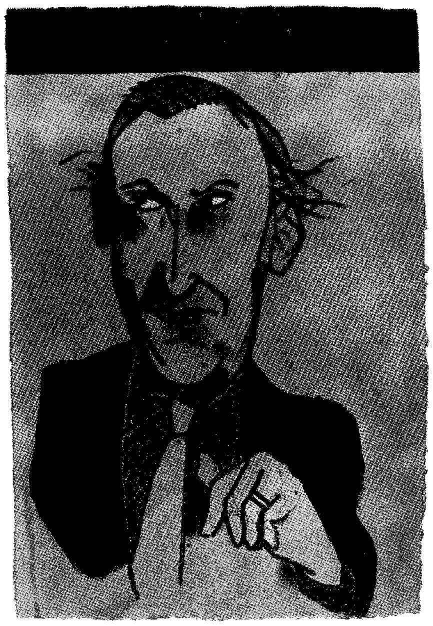
Zinman's unbusinesslike predilections were never more evident than when he operated a conventional business. During the Earthworm era, he had frequent dealings with a Caterpillar franchisee in Cincinnati named Albert Norman. A basic ingredient in their relationship was a shared disdain for the guys in suits at the Caterpillar Tractor Company's main office, in Peoria, Illinois. Zinman and Norman traded used earthmoving equipment in ways that, though entirely legitimate, albeit too convoluted to go into here, proved too imaginative to be tolerated by Peoria. Eventually, his dealings with Zinman cost Norman his Caterpillar franchise. Along the way, Zinman somehow managed to get—and for long periods of time to stay—deeply in debt to Norman without alienating him.

"He's able to get credit when almost no one else possibly could," Norman told me recently from Florida, where he's happily and prosperously retired. "He's either the smartest or the luckiest guy in the world. I once sent my finance manager to New York to collect some money. Michael put his arm around him and took him home and showed him his book collection. My finance manager came back to Cincinnati and said, 'You ought to see the books he's got there.' I said, 'I hope you at least got a half million from him,' and he said, 'I didn't get anything.' Michael showed him some books and convinced him he was good for the money."

In gratitude, Zinman dedicated to Norman a book he wrote and self-published in 1986, "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Raterpillar Tractor Company." The book, which consists of photo reproductions of correspondence and legal documents, accompanied by an explanatory narrative, recounts a quite expensive practical joke that Zinman perpetrated to get on the nerves of the then chairman of Caterpillar, to whom the book is also, rather more ironically, dedicated. This saga began in the late seventies, when Caterpillar sued Earthworm, alleging unfair competition. The litigation, along with a Zinman countersuit, took about six years to settle. Deciding that he hadn't had quite enough fun, Zinman subsequently incorporated the Raterpillar Tractor Company, a shell whose main asset was a letterhead bearing the disclaimer "Raterpillar Tractor Co. is in no way connected with Caterpillar Tractor Co. Caterpillar Tractor Co. sells 'Cats'—Raterpillar Tractor Co. sells rats." As he had hoped, this provoked a new, though far less protracted, bout of legal jousting. The net result, for Zinman, was a bill from his attorneys in the middle five figures and the file of documents that provided the fodder for "Decline and Fall." He printed three thousand five hundred copies, gave away hundreds, and sold the rest, including hundreds at a kiosk in the Peoria airport. "Decline and Fall" is now, by any measure, a rare book, and Zinman himself is down to only three copies.

During the late eighties, Zinman bought a library that had been bequeathed to a synagogue in Yonkers by Irving Levitas, a rabbi, Talmudist, and American historian. To emphasize the esteem in which he held Levitas as a scholar and collector, Zinman told me, "I have a short list of heroes, and Irving

TAKES



RICHARD MERKIN

Waldheim himself is not known as an anti-Semite. He seems to have initialled away the lives of Serbian partisans as easily as he initialled the transit orders for Greek Jews on their way to Auschwitz. The only prejudice that might have seriously interfered with his career was a dislike of short people: *Wiener* magazine says that when he was Foreign Minister he tried to introduce a height requirement for the Foreign Service, so that only tall people could join the diplomat corps. But Austria has what could be called an anti-Semitic "vocabulary of explanation," and Waldheim—apart from one speech about Jewish suffering, very late in his campaign—did nothing really to discourage that vocabulary. Occasionally, he used it himself. He let it be known that the World Jewish Congress controlled the foreign press. He lingered over Jewish names. He stood by, smiling benignly, at provincial rallies while the local *Bürgermeister* went on and on about the foreign conspiracy against Austria's most famous citizen. He stood by, here in Vienna, while "patriots" in *Trachten* beat up people demonstrating against him and the police looked on. Waldheim is not a clever man. He is single-minded and implacably insensitive, and nothing—certainly not the prejudices of his admirers—seems to embarrass him. He was not embarrassed to have been caught lying about where he was and what he was doing from 1942 to 1945 any more than he was embarrassed to have been caught using the United Nations diplomatic pouch to send soft American toilet paper to his family here. He learned one gesture for his campaign: whenever he was at a loss for something to say or something to do, he would open his arms in a kind of big, empty welcome. The gesture was automatic, like the movement of a windup toy. He learned his lines the same way—automatically. (He always did. Once, when he was on a United Nations famine-inspection tour in Africa, he greeted a mother with a dying baby in her arms by telling her what a lovely child she had.) It was clear, once the rumors about him started, that a man with a murky past could easily become President of Austria if he was a victim of Jewish conspiracies, just as a country with a murky past could easily become a democratic republic if it was a victim of Nazism. It was clear to the people in the Volkspartei, who had already put him up for President in 1971 and lost, and it was clear to the people at Young and Rubicam, who were planning his campaign this time around, and who took a leave of absence to continue with Waldheim after the scandal broke and the agency cancelled its contract. "We were looking for impact—you know, a strong color and a strong slogan," one of the advertising men said when he was asked about the poster borrowed from the National Socialists. "We'll ask a client if the product is in line with the strategy, but it's not our business to ask if the product is really washing whiter."

—*Jane Kramer*
Letter from Europe, June 30, 1986

"I do a lot of Off Broadway—you know, like this."

• •

was one of them." Another was A. J. Liebling, the *New Yorker* writer. As an homage, Zinman formed a corporation, which he has continued to use as a vehicle for some of his book buying, and named it Liebling & Levitas. Among the zillion items in Zinman's desk drawers is a bundle of business cards that Levitas kept handy for opportune moments, and that say, "Yes, I have read all these books. Thanks for asking. Irving Levitas."

Which, when Zinman showed me the card, raised in my mind the corollary question, How much of what passes through his hands does he actually read? I can vouch that he's thoughtfully digested Liebling (who occupies a spot on my own short list), because he readily sprinkles conversations with illustrative quotations from "The Earl of Louisiana" and "The Honest Rainmaker" and "The Telephone Booth Indian." But the broader answer seems to be that reading books is subordinate to Zinman's extraordinary need to play with them. What he derives from books is mainly bibliographic knowledge—about books as objects, about the mercantile considerations that went into the production of those objects—rather than a direct absorption of what library professionals refer to as their "intellectual contents." But he clearly has a reverence for learning, for the importance of words, and a ravenous desire to find answers to things, not because he's seeking cosmic truth in books but because he finds pleasure in taking scattered pieces of evidence and constructing a frame and a context. Lacking the discipline and attention span for conventional scholarship, Zinman for several years employed a full-time librarian, Keith Arbour, a highly respected bibliographer and historian, to catalogue his Early American imprints. Arbour published several scholarly papers based upon Zinman's holdings.

One day not long ago, Zinman and I were having lunch at a sushi restaurant near his home. ("If this is the only sushi you've ever eaten, you never know how good it is," he said. "You have to try a lot of other stuff to appreciate it fully.") Our agenda that afternoon called for me to witness an active application of the critical-mess theory; I wanted to see him in action. Flying to Los Angeles one day last spring, it happened, Zinman had been reading a pile of booksellers' catalogues and come across one from an English dealer titled "The Atomic Age from Hiroshima and Nagasaki to Star Wars." From the air, he called the dealer and bought the entire collection, eighteen hundred books and pamphlets. A few days later, he rang the dealer back and bought two hundred and fifty duplicate items.

Not much to my surprise, before we could begin to burrow into the "Atomic Age" collection, we got sidetracked. During lunch, I had dislodged a gold crown from one of my molars, which prompted Zinman, back at the office in Ardsley, to remove from a desk drawer a small cylindrical glass specimen jar. Inside was a bunch—I hesitate to call it a collection—of Zinman's erstwhile dental crowns. He set the jar next to a stack of colorful handbills, a few hundred from his collection of a couple thousand prostitutes' calling cards, a species of ephemera typically found in London telephone booths. While studying these, I noticed, also on the desktop, a pint-size porcelain vase half filled with tar-encrusted pennies.

"Just for the record," I proposed, "how many different collections would you say are in this building at the moment?"

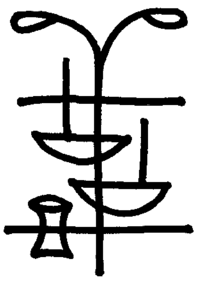
"Let's figure it out," Zinman said, launching a show-and-tell tour. "We can start in this room. Does my ca-ca shelf count?" He was referring to a heap of found objects on a fireplace mantel, an agglomeration that looked like crumbs from the bottom of a vast toy chest—miniature cars and trucks, paper airplanes, automobile hood ornaments, Slinky-eyeball spectacles, Mardi Gras beads. Well, if that counted, I suppose so did the ceramic tub brimming with golf balls which we passed on our way upstairs. ("I found a place where all the golf balls go to die. I could sell them and probably make about a thousand dollars a year, I find so many. But I just give them away.") The second floor was subdivided into Earthworm-vintage office cubicles that are now used to store Zinman's embossed pre-Braille American printing for the blind (a hundred items); nineteenth-century American almanacs (thousands); books-in-parts (two hundred examples of books issued serially, usually by subscription, nineteenth century to the present); American magazines from 1800-30; nineteenth-century lithographed sheet music; Restoration plays (two boxes full); and constitutions (more than seven hundred, from all sorts of organizations, very few governments among them). When we came back downstairs, Zinman noticed that a large shipping carton had been delivered, part of an auction lot of almost two thousand miscellaneous nineteenth- and twentieth-century pamphlets, for which he'd bid five thousand dollars at Swann Galleries, in New York, a couple of weeks earlier.

Skipping the bizarre-titles collection (two hundred and fifty items), which now resided in the basement, we moved to a part of the building that was formerly leased to an aerobics studio. In one big room, just enough space remained to permit navigation among the floor-to-ceiling stacks of boxes—many unopened, such as the dozen or so brown-paper-wrapped parcels containing the "Atomic Age" collection. Then, there were the fifty-four unsold units of Zinman's "American Bible" treatise, a quixotic project he embarked on in 1993: the publication of a four-volume text-and-image portfolio (text by Zinman) of leaves removed from his collection of incomplete Early American Bibles. He printed an edition of a hundred, priced at just under nine thousand dollars apiece, "did everything wrong" in the process, and, to his amazement, still managed to recoup his costs and then some.

The rest of the room was occupied by scores of open cartons of pamphlets, dating from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, which Zinman acquired almost four years ago from an ephemera dealer who had procured them, for the price of scrap, from the New York Public Library. This was material that the library had recorded on microfilm as part of a "preservation" program that deemed the original documents expendable. In 1997 and 1998, Zinman—unable to resist the impulse to rub a great institution's nose in its ill-considered behavior—dispatched to friends, as well as to the library's trustees, poster-size holiday greeting cards devoted to the theme of the library's "trashing" of its own collections.

The following year's holiday missive was again quintessentially Zinmanesque, yet infinitely more sombre and stirring. Zinman is the father of four—a son, Peter, and a daughter, Lisa, from a first marriage, and two daughters, Marisa and Alison, whom he raised with Barbara Weingarten. Alison died of cancer in the spring of 1999, at the age of twenty. On a poster that featured full-size photographs of selections from her collection, Zinman included the following text: "Why look to question the motives of collectors? That the collector expends the time and energy to create a collection alone trumpets its importance to the world. This is Alison's trumpet. What a merry tune it plays." And what did Alison Weingarten collect? Airsickness bags.

"The Atomic Age" would have to wait for another day, Zinman announced, because a different critical mess beckoned: "I can't wait to get in there and see what's inside that box from Swann." So we retraced our steps and arrived in a shelf-lined room where he keeps his twenty-five-hundred-volume reference library. He slit open the shipping carton, fished from the plastic-foam peanuts three metal-reinforced gray cardboard portfolio boxes, and set them on a worktable. "I have no idea what this will be," he said brightly, as if preparing to eat an exquisite meal blindfolded. All he knew was that he would find pamphlets that had been consigned for auction by the New Jersey Historical Society. The first box seemed to be mainly First World War vintage, with quite a bit of material on German atrocities, plus a hodgepodge from all over the map: an essay on Robert Burns; an 1883 New York and Brooklyn Bridge Guide; a chemical-company promotional pamphlet, "Mulford on Land and Sea"; "The Commercial Future of Baghdad" (1917); "The Pre-Historic Remains Which Were Found on the Site of the City of Cincinnati, Ohio" (1876); an 1856 "Catalogue of Officers and Students of Beloit College"; "Vital Problems Affecting the New Rumania" (1919).



According to an arrangement he'd already worked out, he began sorting and making small piles. After gleaning what he wanted, he planned to sell the bulk, for four thousand dollars, to a dealer who'd been the underbidder at Swann's. "I'll send a bunch of pamphlets to friends," he said. "I'll sell a few. I don't want to make any money, but I won't lose any, either." He came across two Evans items from 1800 ("Oh, look, here's something for my collection")—Major General Henry Lee's eulogy for George Washington, and a sermon printed in Hartford, his second and fourth copies, respectively. These would, of course, go to the Library Company. He fingered another pamphlet, chuckled, and handed it to me: "Twenty-ninth Annual Report to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, in Relation to the Relief Fund, by the Presbyterian Board of Relief for Disabled Ministers and the Widows and Orphans of Deceased Ministers," Philadelphia, 1884. Just trying to transcribe the title, I felt my eyes glaze over, my brain go slack with fatigue. I looked up at Zinman, across the table, as he opened another portfolio box and gently dumped out its contents. His eyebrows were arched, he was nodding thoughtfully and smiling faintly. He seemed no happier than usual, but terrifically happy just the same. ♦

FICTION

THE DINNER

BY RODDY DOYLE

LARRY LINNANE LOVED HIS DAUGHTERS

Larry Linnane liked having daughters. He got great value out of them, great crack.

The second kid had been a boy, and that was great, too, having a son, bringing him to the football—Under-7, Under-8, Under-9, all the way up until Laurence, the son, told him he thought he'd play better if Larry stayed at home.

And that was grand, too, the rejection, part of watching them grow up, even though he pretended he was a bit hurt and, actually, he was a bit hurt. But it had all been fine because Mona, the wife, had bought him a Crunchie to cheer him up, and they'd even made love in front of the telly because the house was empty for the first time in years.

And it became a habit—the sex, not the Crunchie—every time Laurence had a match, especially an away match, and especially enjoyable if it was raining out and he could think of Laurence getting drenched in Finglas West or Ballybrack while he lay on the couch with Mona under him or, on the really good days, Mona on top of him.

"Not bad for forty-five!" Larry shouted once, just before they heard the door slamming, and they were sitting up, fully zipped and dressed, and doing the crossword by the time the lounge door opened and three of the four daughters trooped in.

And they refused to tell the girls why they were laughing and why they couldn't stop laughing.

"We're just thinking of poor Laurence out there in the rain," said Mona.

But it was the daughters who really made Larry laugh.

They said that girls were supposed to be the quiet ones, but whoever "they" were they hadn't a clue. His gang, Jesus, there hadn't been a minute's, not a second's peace in the house since the eldest, Stephanie, was born and especially since the other three came after Laurence. Tracy, Vanessa, Nicole, one after another, each one madder and louder than the last.

"Bitch!"

"Wagon!"

"Wagon yourself, yeh bitch!"

Screaming, roaring, flinging one another down the stairs, tearing one another's hair out. The best of friends, in other words. And Larry loved every minute of it. The fights and reconciliations, the broken Barbies, stolen hairspray—Larry watched it all, sat in his corner like a ref who'd been bribed by both sides, and soaked up every wallop and hug.

Larry was fifty now, and the girls were women, fine, big, good-looking women and in no hurry to leave home, and that suited Larry just fine. Because they spoiled him crooked.

He knew there was a kettle in the kitchen—he'd bought it himself, in Power City—but, honest to God, he couldn't have told you exactly where it was.

"Would you like a biscuit with that cuppa, Da?"

"Lovely."

"There's only plain ones left."

"Not to worry," said Larry. "I'll manage. Give us two, though, love. To make up for the chocolate."

They were always ironing and they never objected if one or two of Larry's shirts accidentally ended up on their pile. He loved the smell of the house—fresh clothes, all sorts of spray fighting for air supremacy. Larry could fart all day—and he did, at the weekends—and no one ever noticed or complained.

But it wasn't really about tea and ironing and the freedom to fart with impunity. What Larry really loved was the way the girls brought the world home to him. Every morning at breakfast, and when they came home for the dinner, before going out again, they talked and shouted, all of them together, and Mona in there with them.

"He said it was the Red Bull that made him do it!"

"So I said, 'D'you call that a pay rise?' "

"The strap was killing me!"

"I'm thinkin' o' buyin' shares in Esat, did I tell yis?"

"Nicearse dot-com. Have a look at it tomorrow!"

Their voices reminded Larry of the Artane roundabout—mad, roaring traffic coming at him from all directions. And he loved it, just like he loved the Artane roundabout. Every time Larry drove onto and off that roundabout he felt modern, successful, Irish. And that was exactly how he felt when he listened to his daughters. He'd brought them up, him and Mona, to be independent young ones, and that was exactly what they were. And he trusted them, completely. He was particularly proud of himself when they were talking about sex. That was the real test, he knew—a da listening to his daughters talking about their plumbing—and they did, not a bother on them, and about their sex lives, confidently, frankly, and, yeah, filthily. And Larry passed the test with flying colors. Nothing his daughters said or did ever, ever shocked him.

Until Stephanie brought home the black fella.

A BLACK MAN ON THE KITCHEN TABLE

It was June, the first really decent day of the summer. Nicole was eating her dinner with her legs sticking out the kitchen door, grabbing the bit of sun before it was hijacked by next door's wall. All four of the daughters had sunglasses parked on top of their heads. Laurence,

JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT, "UNTITLED" (1984)/©2001 ARS, NY/ADAGP, PARIS

the son, had sunglasses as well, like the ones Edgar Davids, the Dutch footballer, wore. On Edgar Davids they looked impressive, terrifying, even sexy. On Laurence they looked desperate—he looked like a day-old chick that had just been pushed out of the nest. Larry's heart went out to him.

And that was why he wasn't tuned in to the girls' chat that evening. He was trying to come up with a nice way to tell poor Laurence to bring the glasses back to the shop. So he'd heard none of the usual prying and slagging, the good-natured torture and confession that he loved so much.

He was wondering if Laurence still had the receipt for the goggles when he heard Vanessa asking, "What's he do for his money?"

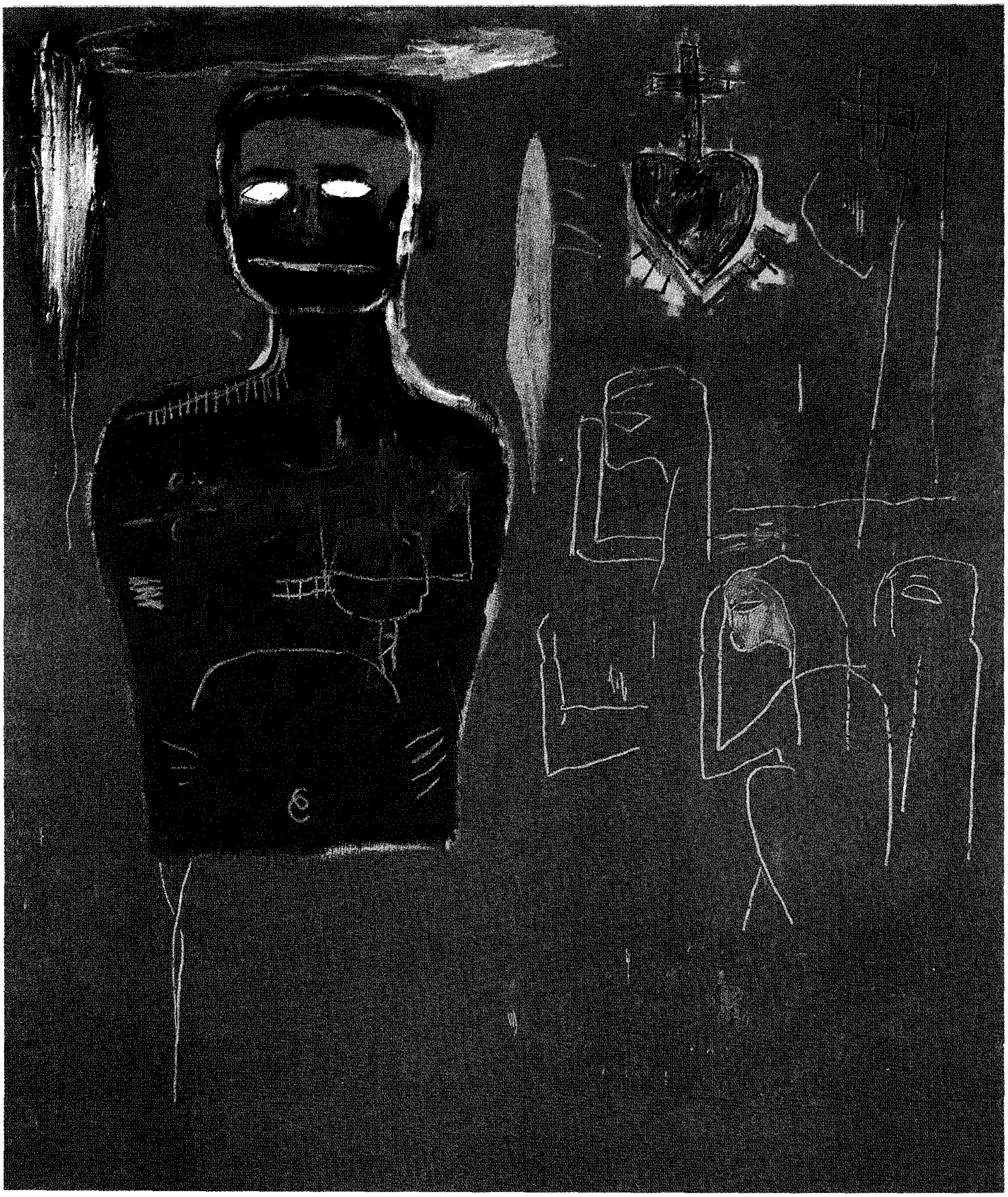
"He's an accountant," said Stephanie.

Larry sat up: no daughter of his was going to get stuck with a bloody accountant.

"At least, he would be," said Stephanie, "if they let him work."

"What's that mean?" said Larry.

They all looked at him. The aggres-



sion and fear in his voice had shocked even him.

“They won’t let him work,” said Stephanie.

“Who won’t?”

“I don’t know,” she said. “The government.”

“Why not?”

“Because they haven’t granted him asylum yet.”

“He’s a refugee?”

“Yeah. I suppose so.”

“Where’s he from?”

“Nigeria.”

Larry waited for the gasps, but there were none, not even from Mona. He wished now he’d been listening earlier. This mightn’t have been a boyfriend she was talking about at all; it could have been someone she’d never even met.

But Vanessa put him right.

“You should see him, Da. He’s gorgeous.”

And all the other girls nodded and agreed.

“Dead serious-looking.”

“A ride.”

So, it wasn’t that Stephanie actually brought home the black fella. It was the idea of him, the fact of his existence out there somewhere, the fact that she’d met him and danced with him and God-knows-what-elsed with him. But if it had been an actual black man that she’d plonked on the table in front of Larry, he couldn’t have been more surprised, and angry, and hurt, and confused.

He stood up.

“He is not gorgeous!” he shouted.

Nicole laughed, but stopped quickly.

“He’s not gorgeous or anything else! Not in this house!”

He realized he was standing up, but he didn’t want to sit down again. He couldn’t.

Mona spoke. “What’s wrong?”

He looked at six faces looking up at him, waiting for the punch line, praying for it. Frightened faces, confused, and angry.

There was nothing he could say. Nothing safe, nothing reassuring or even clear. He didn’t know why he was standing there.

“Is it because he’s black?” said Mona.

Larry didn’t let himself nod. He never thought he’d be a man who’d nod: yes, I object to another man’s color. Shame was rubbing now against his anger.

“Phil Lynott was black, love,” Mona reminded him.

Phil Lynott had been singing “Whiskey in the Jar” when Larry and Mona had stopped dancing and kissed for the first time.

And now he could talk.

“Phil Lynott was Irish!” he said. “He was from Crumlin. He was fuckin’ civilized!”

And now Stephanie was right in front of him, tears streaming from her, and he couldn’t hear a word she was screaming at him. And he couldn’t see her himself now; his own tears were fighting their way out. And he wished, he wished to Christ they could start all over again, that he could sit down and listen and stop it before all this had to happen.

It was Mona who rescued him. “We’ll have to meet him,” she said. This was just after she’d hit the table with the frying pan.

“No,” said Larry.

“Yes, Larry,” she said, and he knew she was right. If he kept saying no they’d all leave, all the girls. It was what he would have expected of them. “Stand up for your rights.” That was what he’d roared after them every morning, on their way out to school. “Get up, stand up. Don’t give up the fight.”

The house was empty now. Mona had imposed a ragged peace. Larry and Stephanie had hugged each other, yards of brittle space between them. The girls had taken her down to the local. They’d be talking about him now, he knew. Racist. Bastard. Racist. Pig. His cup was empty, but he hadn’t noticed the tea.

“It could be worse, love,” said Mona.

Larry looked at her. “He could have been an estate agent,” she said.

AIDS, WAR, THE WORKS

“Ben,” said Mona, sounding just a little bit impatient.

“Ben?”

“Yeah,” she said. “It hasn’t changed since the last time you asked.”

“It’s just—I’m hopeless with foreign names,” said Larry.

And Mona slammed the door. Larry watched her out in the garden, murdering the hedge with bites of the shears that, he knew, were meant for him.

It had been a week since the blowup with Stephanie, since the invite had gone out to the black lad—Larry kept forgetting his name. He really did.

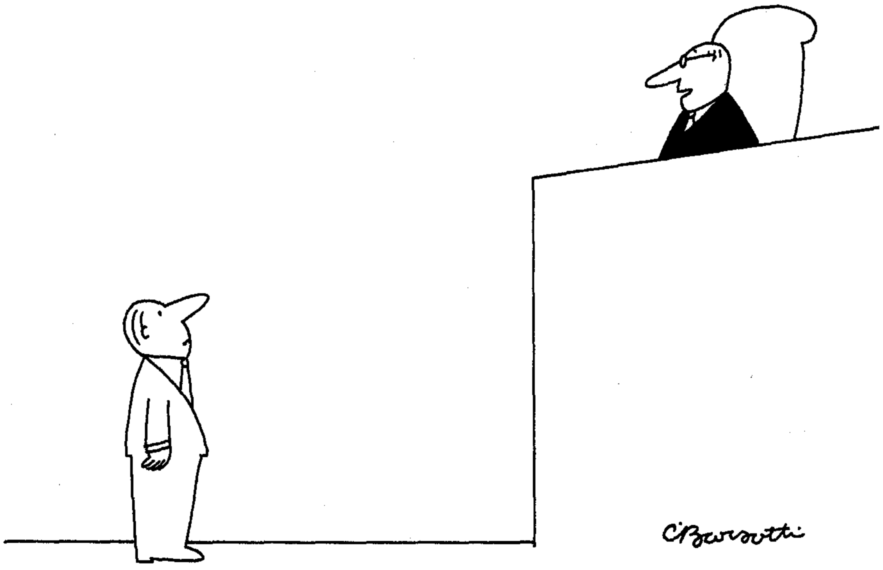
“Ben.”

And he—Ben—was coming tonight. Larry looked at his watch. In three or four hours.

He looked out at Mona.

She was worried as well, and upset, just like him. He wasn’t the only one who’d been lying awake at night. She’d been getting up, wandering around downstairs. She wasn’t a happy woman out there.

It had been a week of politeness, smiles, and heavy silences. He could hear



“Oh, sorry. I was just musing on the nature of power. Did you say guilty or not guilty?”

cutlery on the plates for the first time in years. He tortured himself for things to say, nice things that would prove he wasn't a bigot.

"Does he know Kanu?" he asked Stephanie. And he couldn't believe it as he heard himself.

"Who?" said Stephanie.

"The footballer," said Larry—he was stuck now. "He's Nigerian. Plays for Arsenal."

"I don't know," said Stephanie. "Do you know Roy Keane?"

"No."

"Well, then."

And then she smiled, and there was a hint of an apology in it; she didn't want to make a fool of him. And he'd smiled. They'd all smiled. But, still and all, it had been the worst week that Larry could remember. All week, he'd had to think, and ask himself rough questions.

He asked himself questions all the time. Where did I leave my keys? Will I have the last Hobnob or will I leave it for Mona? But it was a long time since a question had made him squirm. And he'd been squirming all week.

He wasn't a racist. He was sure about that now, positive—he thought. When he watched a footballer, for example, he didn't see skin; he saw skill. Paul McGrath, black and brilliant. Gary Breen, white and shite. And it was the same with music. Phil Lynott, absolutely brilliant. Neil Diamond, absolutely shite. And politics. Mandela, a hero. Ahern, a chancer. And women, too. Naomi Campbell—*Jaysis*. There wasn't a racist bone or muscle in his body, nothing tugging at him to change his mind about Stevie Wonder or Thierry Henry because they were black. And it worked the other way, too. Gary Breen, black, still shite but no worse. Naomi Campbell, white, probably still gorgeous but better off black. Bertie Ahern, black—Larry laughed for the first time in a week.

But why, then? Why didn't he want a refugee in the family?

Well, there was AIDS for a start. Africa was riddled with it. And then there was—it wasn't the poverty exactly—it was the hugeness of it, the Live Aid pictures, the thousands and thousands of people, the flies on their faces, the dead kids. Heartbreaking, but—what sort of society was that? What sort of people came out of a place like that? And all the civil wars—machetes and machine guns, and burning car tires draped around people's necks, the savagery. Fair enough, the man was an accountant, but that was the place he came from. And why had he left—what was wrong with Nigeria? He could be a criminal, like Al Pacino being thrown out of Cuba, in "Scarface." He could be one of those religious fanatics, or married already, two or three times for all they knew. And they'd never know—it was too far away. It was too different; that was it. Too unknowable, and too frightening for his daughter.

"Ben," he said, quietly. "Howyeh, Ben. Great weather. Must remind you of home."

Could he say that? He didn't see why not. But he didn't want to hurt the lad's feelings or get into trouble with the women. He'd be polite, fair. He'd like the lad—Ben—he'd shake his hand, and hold it long enough to prove that it wasn't about his skin.

But then what was going to happen?

He had his answers, his objections—AIDS, war, the works. But how could he list them when they were having their dinner? And, more to the point, how could he do it if he wasn't certain, in his heart of hearts, that they were his real objections?

Larry was an honest man, but it was a long time since he'd had to prove it.

He looked at his watch.

The time was crawling. And that suited Larry just fine. He was dreading the dinner, terrified of what was going to happen.

A GORGEOUS SMELL

That was the bell.

Damn it, he had one leg in his underpants, the other one hanging over the floor. He'd wanted to be down there to meet the black lad, Ben, at the door. "Hello, Ben"—not "howyeh," he'd decided—"great weather. Must remind you of home." But here he was, up in the bedroom, fighting his knickers. This wasn't what he'd planned at all. He didn't want Mona and the girls thinking that he was avoiding the lad, that he was being rude or just ignorant.

"Calm down, calm down," Larry told his fingers as they tried to button his shirt.

He'd decided against the suit. The young fella would probably be in a track-

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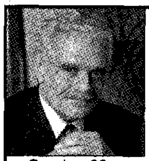

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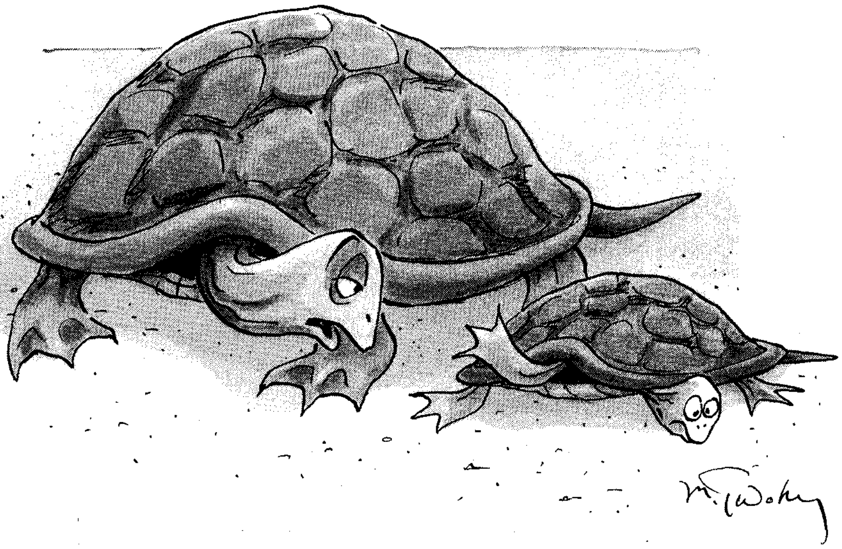

"Honey, your head's through the armhole again."

• •

suit. So Larry was dressing himself a bit up from that, just enough to impose his authority—the older man, the citizen, the firm but fair father. So he'd chosen the good trousers and a clean shirt, no tie. And his black shoes—where were the stupid bloody things?

Under the bloody bed. Bang in the middle, just out of reach. For a second—less than a second—he saw Mona down on her hunkers, shoving them in under there with the brush. But he shook himself; he was being stupid. He put on his runners; they were grand—nearly new, still white.

He took a quick goo at himself in the wardrobe mirror.

He'd do. He took the corner of toilet paper from just under his chin. The blood clot came with it. He was grand now, ready.

Down the stairs. Into the lounge. There they all were, squeezed in. He saw all the girls first, Stephanie and Vanessa and—where was the black fella? Maybe it hadn't been him at the door at all—but Tracy stepped aside and there he was.

In a fuckin' suit.

The best, most elegant suit Larry had ever been close to. A small lad—very, very black—and completely at home in the suit. The wall looked filthy behind him.

"Howyeh, Ben," said Larry.

Damn it, he'd said, "Howyeh."

He took the couple of steps to shake hands with him.

The first black hand Larry had ever shaken. He felt sophisticated—not a bother on him—shaking a black hand. Not even looking at it.

He'd been expecting someone like Eddie Murphy, without the grin and the shine. But that type of look. But this was more like meeting Sidney Poitier. Larry suddenly felt that he was the one being interviewed.

"Great weather, wha'. It must remind you of home."

And then he heard it. The rain. Whacking against the window behind him. He looked, and saw a sheet of the stuff charging down the glass.

Where had it come from? It had been lovely when he'd gone up to shave. He was still hanging on to the lad's hand. There was sweat in the clinch now, and it was Larry's. He was failing here.

But they were laughing, the girls, Mona, even young Laurence. They thought Larry had been joking. They were grateful. He was breaking the ice, making the lad feel at home. For a few seconds, Larry forgot why they were all there, he forgot completely. He just wanted them all to love him. Especially the black lad in the suit.

He was on the verge of saying, "Welcome to Ireland," when he remembered what had to be done—and he looked properly at the lad for the first time and tried to see the religious fanatic, the AIDS carrier, the crook, the bigamist.

But all he could see was a small, handsome, intelligent man looking straight back at him. Not a scar or a squint; his eyes never budged from Larry's. Again, Larry felt a sudden, roaring need to impress him, a demand from his gut to be liked by him.

But the smell saved him.

It was too sweet to be aftershave and not sweet enough to be coming from Mona or the girls. It was the lad—Ben. He was wearing that men's stuff. Men's perfume.

Jesus.

Larry let go of his hand.

Larry had rules. He always held doors open for Mona when they went out together. He never let a woman cut his hair. He never put on anything that smelled—aftershave, bay rum, even talc if it was scented—they didn't get near Larry. A man with a smell was hiding something. That was what Larry believed.

And what was this guy hiding? Larry got ready to stare him out of it, to let him know that he knew. The suit hadn't fooled him. The suit and the—

Then Mona spoke. "God, that's a gorgeous smell," she said.

And the girls, like little dogs in the back window of some gobshite's car, all nodded their heads.

And Ben smiled and turned away from Larry.

SPUDS

Roast beef, boiled Wexford spuds, gravy you could dye your hair with—all of his favorite foods, but all Larry could smell was the black fella's perfume. But that was fine. It kept Larry—focussed. That was the word.

"Lovely," he said to Mona, and pointed at the plate with his fork.

He watched the black fella putting away the spuds like he'd been born and bred in Gorey. His plate was never empty. He'd lift one spud, and Mona or Stephanie would replace it with another from the bowl, and no objections from him, either, a quiet "Thank you" every time.

"D'yeh have spuds like them in Nigeria?" said Larry.

"No," said Ben.

"They're great, aren't they?"

Ben looked at Larry, and Larry could tell: this guy knew what was what—you didn't slag Irish spuds at an Irish table, especially in the summer, even if the owner of the table had never dug up a potato in his life.

"They are delicious," said Ben. "Thank you."

"Thank the chef," said Larry.

"He's been thanking me non-stop since he came in the door," said Mona.

"So he should," said Larry. And he pointed at the plate again. "Magnificent," he said, and he looked at Ben. "Amn't I right?"

"Ah, lay off, Da, will yeh," said Tracy. "He's the same every summer," she told Ben. "Going on and on about the new potatoes."

"It's like his fight for Irish freedom," said Mona. "Standing up for the spuds."

Larry smiled; he knew when he had to.

"What d'yis eat over in Nigeria, Ben?" he asked.

"Anything they can get," said young Laurence.

And the roof came off the house.

There was what Laurence had said, yeah, but there was also the fact that he'd spoken at all. As far as Larry knew, they were the first words out of Laurence since Christmas, when he'd got sick in the hall and said, "Sorry." By the time Larry got around to thinking about what his son had actually said, young Laurence was being walloped around the head and shoulders by five fine women—his four loving sisters and his ma.

"I was only joking!"

"So am I!" said Stephanie, as she brought her dessert spoon down on his skull.

"Apologize!"

"I'm sorry, righ'."

"Like you mean it!"

Laurence was on the floor, trying to crawl to the door.

"Please," said Ben. He stood up. "Please. I accept the apology."

Everyone looked at him.

"I have become used to these insults," he said.

"Not in this house, you haven't," said Larry. And then, to Laurence, "Get up, yeh gobshite."

And they were all sitting down again, Laurence as well. Laurence half looked at Ben.

"I didn't mean anything," he said.

Ben nodded. "Yes," he said. "But . . . nobody means anything."

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“I didn’t,” said Laurence.

“Yes.”

And Larry spoke. “He means it.”

“Yes.”

Ben was looking straight back at Larry. There was no gratitude there, and no hint of a smile, no shrug. But there was no anger either, and no hurt that Larry could see. Larry knew, then and there: he liked Ben.

“Does it happen often, Ben?” said Mona. “You know?”

“Yes,” said Ben. “I am afraid so.”

“All the time,” said Stephanie. “He can’t walk down the street without someone shouting something at him.”

“That’s desperate,” said Larry.

“And not just eejits like him,” said Stephanie, pointing at young Laurence. “Respectable-looking people. You know, like. In suits. And women with their kids.”

“God,” said Mona.

She looked at Ben, but she couldn’t think of anything to say, nothing that wasn’t empty.

“Well,” said Larry. “All I can say is, on behalf of the Irish people, sorry. The Irish are warm, friendly people, Ben.”

“Yeah, maybe,” said Stephanie.

“Give me a chance, love,” said Larry. “Ben, in 1985, when Live Aid was on, the Irish people gave more money than any other country in the world. A small, little country.”

“So what?” said Stephanie. “That’s just stupid.”

“Shut up, love,” said Larry.

He was getting annoyed with her. He was trying to get to the point, to everything he wanted to say to Ben. He wanted to get there gently but firmly. And he didn’t want to be misunderstood. “But they’re frightened, Ben,” he said.

“I will not shut up,” said Stephanie.

“Just shut it, for Jaysis sake,” said Larry.

“You’re just standing up for all those pricks—”

“Please!” It was Ben. And he stood up again.

“Please.” He looked at Stephanie. “Stephanie, your lack of respect for your father shocks me.”

“Good man, Ben,” said Larry.

“And your language,” said Ben, and he looked from Stephanie to Larry. “I will not listen to this profanity. I find it most offensive.”

And now Larry was standing up.

“You fuckin’ what?”

THE NAKED CHEF

They stood staring at each other. Larry could feel himself shaking. His face was burning. He could feel his heart kicking the blood straight to his cheeks and armpits.

And he looked across at the black fella. Not a bead of sweat that Larry could see. Did black people blush? If this guy did, Larry couldn’t see it.

It wasn’t fair. Larry felt exposed, stupid, and even more angry and hopeless. And your man over there just looking back at him, like he was an ad on the side of a bus shelter.

“Get out of my house,” said Larry.

He didn’t know he’d been going to say it.

“If that is what you wish,” said Ben.

It was too late to take it back, to sit down and start again. And Larry felt even more hopeless. He watched the black lad walk around the table toward the door.

But Mona stretched her legs, and pushed her chair, until she was sitting right in front of Ben.

“Stay where you are, Ben,” she said.

“But,” said Ben, “it appears that I am not welcome.”

“Three things, Ben,” said Mona. “One. You are welcome. Two. I spent all day making the dessert; I got it off ‘The Naked Chef’—”

“It better be all you got off the naked chef,” said Tracy.

“Shut it, you,” said Mona, and she looked back at Ben. “So you’re not leaving here until you’ve eaten your share of it. And, three. Get down off your high horse, so we can have a nice chat with the coffee. O.K.?”

Ben looked down at Mona. “What is the dessert?” he said.

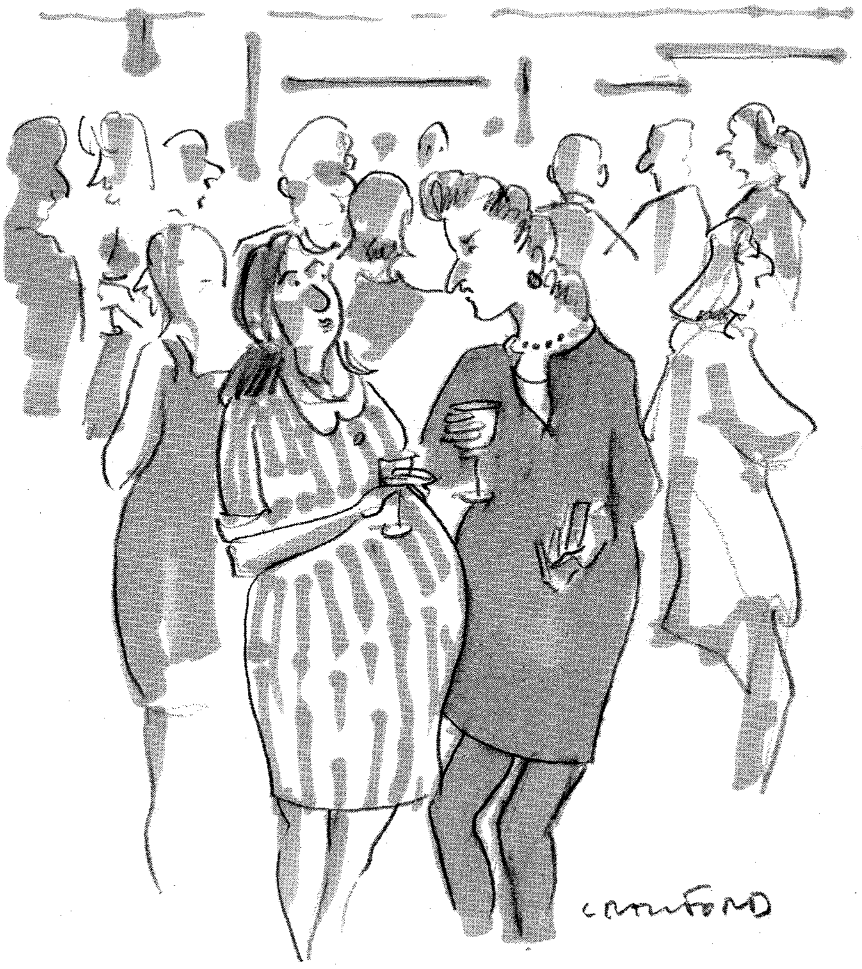
“Chocolate pudding.”

“With cream?”

“Yep.”

“Then I will stay.”

“Good man.”



“Have you and Tim picked out a name for the career obstacle yet?”

"Do I have no say in this?" said Larry. He knew the answer.

"No," said Mona.

But Larry's anger was spent and his brain was in gear again. He knew: he'd been rescued by Mona. And he'd seen the chocolate pudding. He sat down.

And Ben sat down.

Stephanie went to get the pudding from the kitchen, and Mona tried to fill the huge, heavy gap that was sitting on the table between Larry and Ben. "So, Ben," she said, "do you have family still in Nigeria?"

"Yes," said Ben. "My mother died some years ago. Three years ago, last week."

"Oh, I'm sorry," said Mona.

And Larry wanted to say it, too, but he didn't—he couldn't.

"My father lives in the house of one of my sisters," said Ben.

"Where?" said Mona.

"Kaduna."

"I haven't heard of that one. All I know is Lagos."

Ben smiled, and shrugged.

"Still," said Mona, "I don't suppose you knew much about Ireland before you came, did you?"

"No," said Ben. "That is right. I knew of Dublin. And Belfast, of course. Bombs and strife and Dr. Ian Paisley. And I knew that someone called Dana won the Eurovision Song Contest."

They laughed, Larry and Laurence included.

"Where did you pick that up?"

"I do not know," said Ben.

And Stephanie came back with the dessert and lowered it onto the table.

"Ah now, look at that."

They all admired, and sat back to make room for the pudding's glory. Mona stood. They watched her as she cut the pudding into eight slices. If she'd used a geometry set she couldn't have been fairer. She put a slice onto each plate. The plates were handed from sister to sister to brother to sister to black guest to sister to Da and, finally, Mona kept the last plate and sat down. They all picked up their forks.

"Now," said Larry. "We'll see if it tastes as good as it looks."

"Have you other family, Ben?" said Mona.

"Yes," said Ben. "I have one brother."

"Younger, older?"

"Older," said Ben. "It is delicious. Thank you." And he smiled at Mona. "I am glad I stayed."

Suddenly, the chocolate was gone from under Larry's nose, and all he could smell was the black fella's perfume.

"He's flirting with my missus," he said to himself. "He's trying to get off with the whole fuckin' family."

"What does your brother do?" Mona asked Ben.

"He is a doctor," said Ben. "That is—he will be a doctor. He will soon be resuming his studies."

"Why did he stop?" said Larry.

"Larry." Mona was warning Larry. She looked back at Ben. "What about sisters?" she said.

"I have three sisters. Two." Ben looked very young now; he looked down at the table. "Three," he said. "I have three sisters."

"What happened?" said Mona.

Ben said nothing at first. Stephanie shrugged slightly; she didn't know what was happening.

"My sister," said Ben. "My sister. Disappeared."

Suddenly, Larry felt very cold.

TWO OF THEM

Larry looked across at Ben. He saw a face trying to control itself. The eyes wet, the makings of sweat on the forehead. Each breath a decision.

"It happened," said Ben. "It happened after I left Nigeria." They waited. "I left soon after my brother was arrested."

Larry knew what had happened. He knew what "disappeared" meant. He'd seen a program, years ago; women going to a dump in the outskirts of a city, in South America somewhere, searching every morning for the bodies of their husbands and sons. He'd watched as the women climbed huge mounds of steaming rubbish. One of them picking up a shirt; the shirt going from woman to woman.

They waited for Ben to talk.

Larry remembered hoping, praying, hoping to Christ that it wouldn't be a shirt that one of them knew. And then changing his mind. As he began to understand how long this had been going on. Some of these were old women who hadn't been old when they'd first walked

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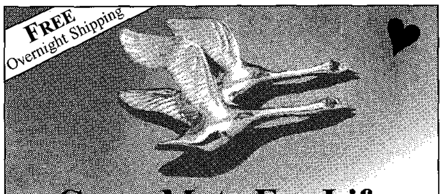

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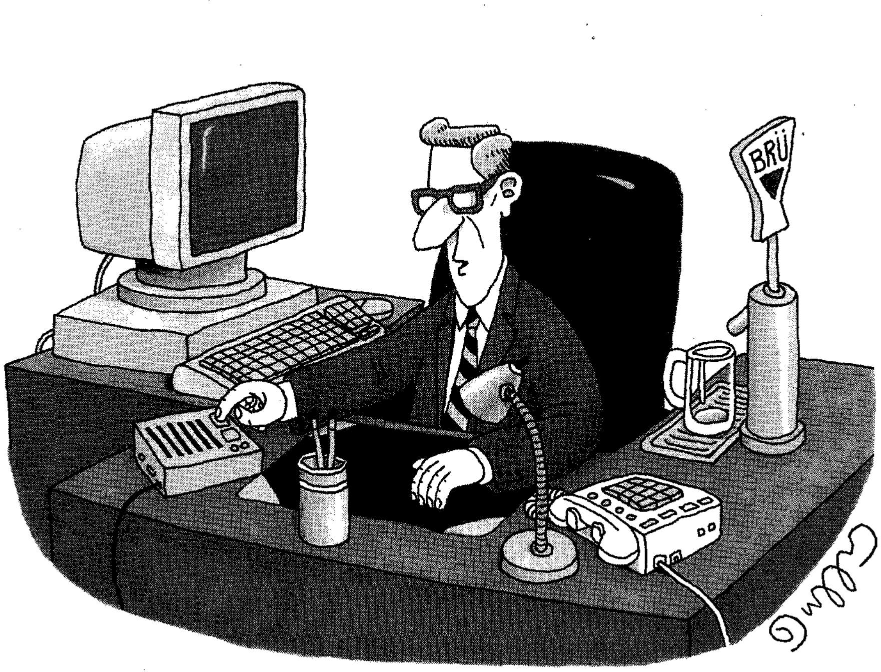


"Ms. Johnson, bring in your steno pad. Also, a new keg."

• •

out of the city to the dump. Searching for proof, bending down and rooting for it, dreading it. First thing, every morning, for the rest of their lives.

Larry wondered if he should ask the lad a question, to give him a hand. But he knew: his voice, any voice would have been an assault just now.

Ben fixed his eyes on the wall behind Mona.

"She went to work one day. But she did not go—she did not arrive. And she did not come home."

"What did she do, Ben?" said Mona. "Her job, I mean."

"She was a teacher."

"What was her name?" said Stephanie.

"Jumi," said Ben.

They waited.

"Somewhere between my mother's house and the school. Jumi—" He shrugged.

"Was your mother still alive at the time?" said Mona.

"Yes."

"Oh, God love her."

"Yes."

"And they found no trace of her at all?"

"If you mean my family," said Ben, "no. They found nothing. If you mean the authorities—" Again, he shrugged. "My sister spoke her mind," he said. "It can be a dangerous activity. In some places and at certain times."

"Just like that," said Larry.

"Yes," said Ben.

"I'm sorry for your troubles, Ben," said Larry.

Ben nodded, twice. "Thank you."

Mona put her hand on Ben's, squeezed it, and took her hand away.

And Vanessa spoke.

"Your brother got out of jail there."

"Yes," said Ben. "He is a free man again."

"That's good, anyway."

"Yes."

And there was nothing for a while. It wasn't that Larry didn't want to talk. He did want to talk—badly. To say anything, any old shite. He just wanted to talk and talk. And to hear his kids talking back and laughing. To fill the house with their noise. To prove that they were all alive and solid.

But there was poor Ben. His mother, his sister, his brother. What could Larry ever say?

He saw Mona looking at him.

He nodded at his empty plate. "Brilliant," he said.

"I made two of them," said Mona. "There's another one in the fridge."

They all looked at her. God, they loved her; she always, always got it right.

"Will I get it?" said Stephanie.

And now they looked at Ben. It was up to him.

He saw them looking at him, and his mouth opened slightly, and stayed that way. It was like he'd become a photograph of himself, his copied eyes fixed on Larry. Then he turned to Mona and spoke.

"Jumi," he said. "Jumi loved a food we call *ogi*. It is something like chocolate. So, yes. Please."

And Stephanie legged it into the kitchen. And they could talk again.

"Is your brother going to stay there?" said Tracy.

"Yes," said Ben. "He has no wish to leave. He is optimistic."

"Is it safe?"

"He thinks yes."

"Have you been back?" said Mona.

"No," said Ben. "Not since I left. I would certainly like to."

"So, why don't you?" said Larry.

And someone kicked him.

MAD LITTLE YOUNG ONES

Laurence.

"What was that for?" said Larry.

Bang on the shin.

"Apologize," said Laurence.

"What for?" said Larry.

"You told him to go back to Nigeria," said Laurence.

"No, I didn't." He looked across at Ben. "I didn't," he said. "I was only wondering. Why you hadn't been back. That's all." He looked at Laurence. "That's all."

"It would be too expensive," said Ben.

"Of course, yeah," said Larry. He'd been thinking that.

"And," said Ben, "if I were to leave Ireland, it would be difficult for me to get back in."

"But," said Larry. "D'you mind me asking? If your brother's grand about it. If he's happy to stay there. And he's going to study his doctoring, or whatever—"

"Why do I not go back?"

"D'you see what I mean?" said Larry.

"I want to live here," said Ben. "For now. I want my children—" Larry looked at Stephanie. There was no blush there, no hidden eyes. "—to live as children do here. I want them to take comfort for granted. I want money in my pocket. Is that wrong, do you think?"

"No," said Larry. "Good luck to you." And then he said it. "I'm sure yis'll make a very happy couple." And he meant it.

He could see his grandchildren—he had to blink fast, to keep his tears to himself. Mad little young ones, charging up and down the stairs. Four or five of them—all girls, maybe one boy. Black and Irish, a gorgeous mix of Stephanie and Ben. He could even hear them. He could feel the house wobbling as they charged in every Sunday afternoon.

"What're you on about?" said Stephanie.

"Well," said Larry. He smiled, and shrugged. There was nothing else he could say. "You have my blessing" was too formal, "fire away" was a bit too crude.

"We're not getting married or anything," said Stephanie.

"What?" said Larry. "After all that?"

"What?"

"This," said Larry. He nodded at the table. "All of it, the whole thing. All the chat and that." He tried not to sound too devastated. "Why not?"

"We're just friends," said Stephanie.

"Very good bleedin' friends," said Tracy. And all the girls and Mona laughed, and now Stephanie was blushing.

"Feck off," she said. "The state of yis."

Ben, beside her, looked happy enough, but uncomfortable. And Larry, suddenly, was happy, too.

Ben stood up.

"I must go," he said. "The bus."

"I'll see you off the premises," said Larry. And now they stood at the front door, just the pair of them, Larry and Ben.

"So—" said Larry. "That went well, I thought."

"Yes," said Ben.

"They were fine, weren't they?" said Larry. "The girls."

"Yes," said Ben.

"So," said Larry.

He was happy enough. He wasn't a racist. There was a black lad standing beside him, and he wanted to be his father-in-law. He wasn't sure why, but that didn't matter. A black lad who was riding his daughter, maybe two or three times a week. And it was grand. Larry looked at Ben, and he liked him.

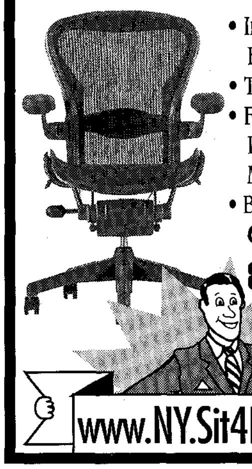
"Well," he said. "See you again sometime, maybe."

"Yes," said Ben.

"Seeyeh."

"Goodbye."

And Larry shut the door. ♦



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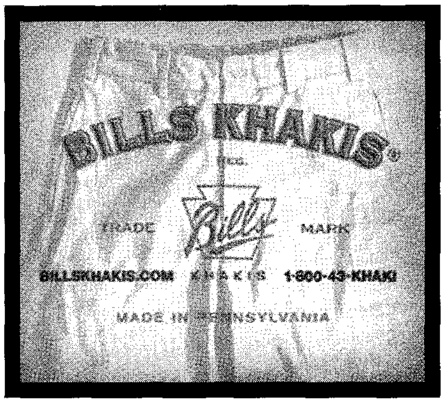

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THE CRITICS

BOOKS

AT HOME IN THE WORLD

A new translation of "Anna Karenina" reveals its invisible architecture.

BY JAMES WOOD

Everyone who reads Tolstoy feels that it is an experience different in kind, not just degree, from reading the other great novelists. But how, and why? Just as one is supposed to approach an elephant not from the front but from the side, the critic finds himself becoming, alongside Tolstoy's massive straightforwardness, a mere poser of angles. The transparency of Tolstoy's art—realism as a kind of neutral substrate, like air—makes it very difficult to account for, and more often than not one blusters in tautologies. Why are his characters so real? Because they are so individual. Why does his world feel so true? Because it is so real. And so on. Even Tolstoy himself was forced into paradox when defending his work. In a letter to his friend Nikolai Strakhov, written at the same time as "Anna Karenina," he argued that his writings were not collections of ideas that could be abstracted from the text but a network: "This network itself is not made up of ideas (or so I think), but of something else, and it is absolutely impossible to express the substance of this network directly in words: it can be done only indirectly, by using words to describe characters, acts, situations."

This letter is quoted by Richard Pevear in his fine introduction to the new translation that he and Larissa Volokhonsky have produced of "Anna Karenina" (Viking; $40). Great translations age, while great novels merely mature, and it would be valuable to have even an ordinary contemporary English version of Tolstoy's book. But Pevear and Volokhonsky are at once scrupulous translators and vivid stylists of English, and their superb rendering allows us, as perhaps never before, to grasp the palpability of Tolstoy's "characters, acts, situations."

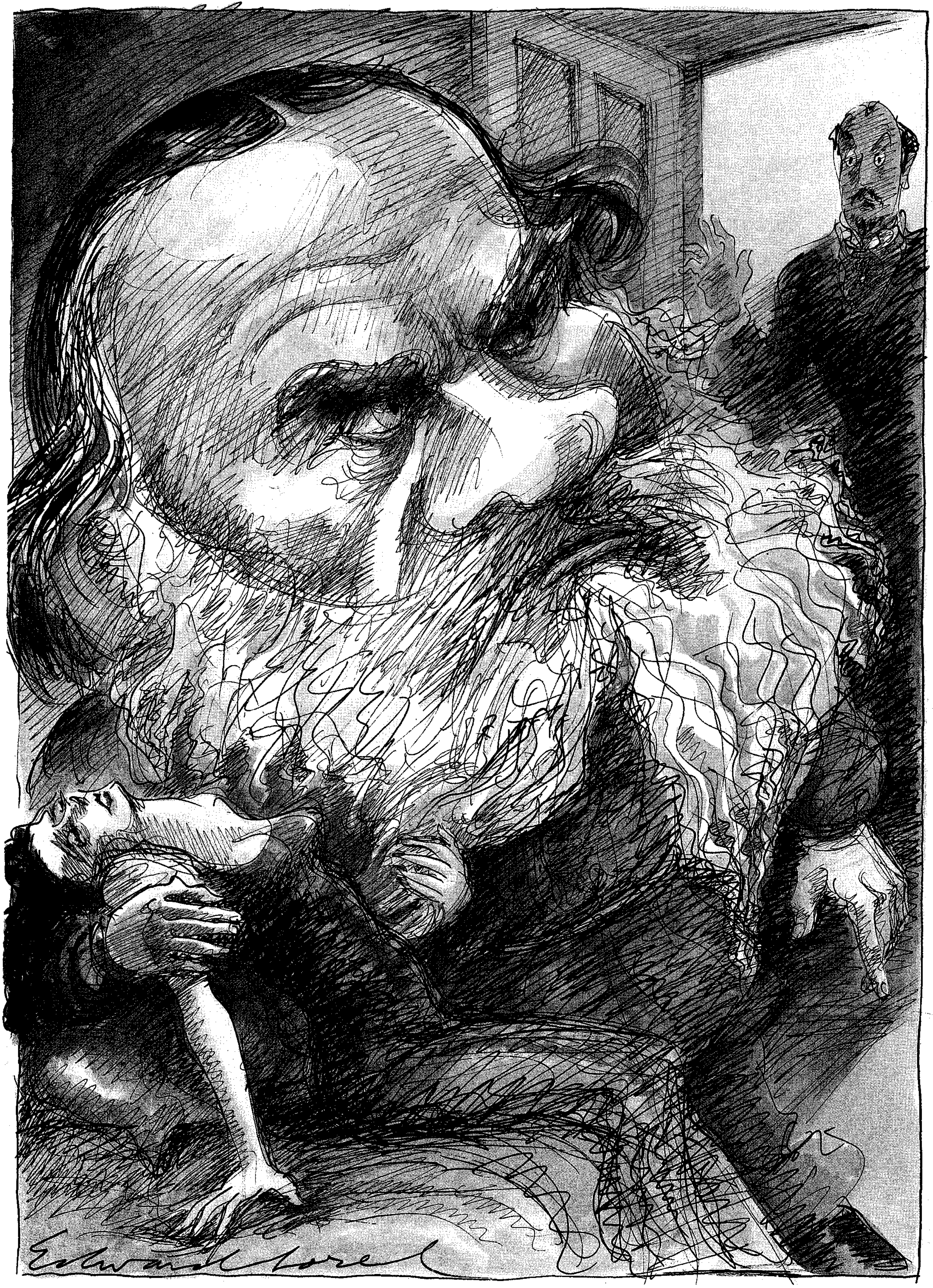
The novel's opening provides an example of Tolstoy's easy fullness, and of this translation's happy loyalty to it. Stiva Oblonsky—vigorous and wellborn, simple, handsome, "cheerful and content," the possessor of a habitually kind smile—has been having an affair with the former governess of his children. Unfortunately, his wife, Dolly, has found out, and Stiva miserably recalls the recent evening when, returning from the theatre and "holding a huge pear for his wife" (we are two pages into the novel, and already Tolstoy's succulence of detail is bearing fruit), he found her not in the drawing room but in their bedroom, holding an incriminating letter.

But Stiva is incapable of depression. Like many of Tolstoy's men, he has a self-sufficiency that verges on egoism. Like Shakespeare's, Tolstoy's characters feel real to us in part because they feel so real to themselves, take their own universes for granted. What can Stiva do about his wife's unhappiness? Life tells him to go on living, in obliviousness, and that is all. In effect, he forgets about it. He takes what is clearly a customary pleasure in the rituals of waking and dressing. He puts on his "grey dressing gown with the light-blue silk lining," and we see him "drawing a goodly amount of air into the broad box of his chest," going to the window "with the customary brisk step of his splayed feet, which so easily carried his full body." A barber arrives, and with his "glossy, plump little hand" sets about "clearing a pink path between his long, curly side-whiskers." Then Stiva sits down to breakfast and opens "the still damp morning newspaper."

Tolstoy generally starts with the description of a character's body, and the body will tend to fix that character's essence. Repeated reference is made to these essences, in a method of leitmotif. Stiva's smile appears at the beginning of the novel and never really goes away. Stiva's sister, Anna Karenina, also has "a quick step, which carried her rather full body with such strange lightness." And these essences are both physical and moral. It might be said that, morally speaking, Stiva and Anna have too light a tread, are not grounded enough—unlike, say, Levin, Tolstoy's spokesman, who is described as "a strongly built, broad-shouldered man," and is first seen "pacing around" outside Stiva's office. Anna's husband, Alexei Karenin, is cold and dutiful, an unimaginative Petersburg bureaucrat, and far too grounded: he is seen at the Petersburg station, by Vronsky, who is irritated by the way Karenin walks, "swinging his whole pelvis and his blunt feet."

Stiva Oblonsky, like many of Tolstoy's characters, cannot help being his essence, and his essence is his body: simple, broad, sybaritic. But such merry forcefulness is infectious, and Stiva is the kind of man who gives off a life heat that others delight in being warmed by. His valet, Matvei, enjoys helping to dress his "pampered body," and a few pages later, when Stiva and Levin have dinner at the Anglia restaurant, the old Tartar waiter cannot help smiling at the way Stiva relishes the food. The reader is infected in the same way, and a curious transaction begins to occur—remember that the novel is only a few pages old—whereby we, too, yearn to be in the presence of a man so self-sufficient that he would probably barely notice us. With delight, we watch Stiva eat, "peeling the sloshy oysters from their pearly shells," we see the Tartar waiter, "his tails flying over his broad hips," and we see Levin sulking—Levin, the prig from the country, the moralist

EDWARD SOREL



Tolstoy planned a novel that would have condemned Anna outright, but, as he worked on it, she grew in both sympathy and beauty.

who would prefer to be eating "white bread and cheese" and is offended by these "surroundings of bronze, mirrors, gas-lights, Tartars."

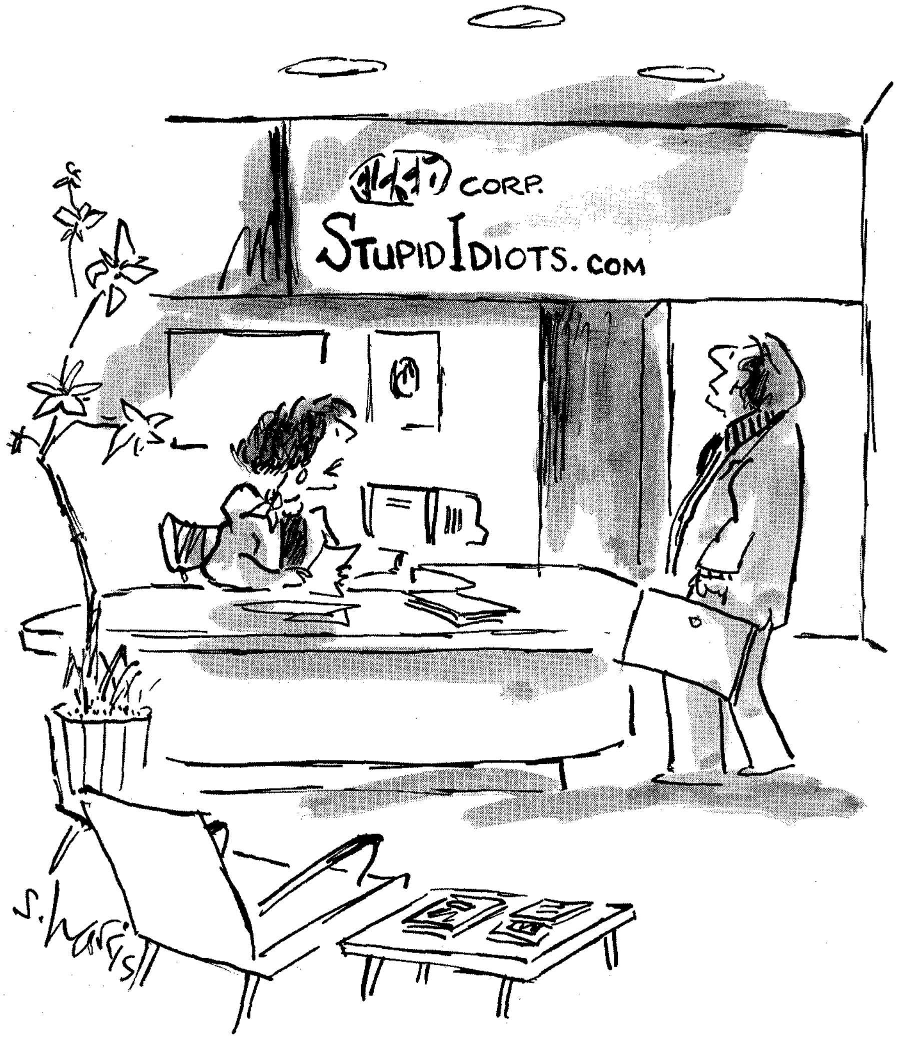
Always, in Pevear and Volokhonsky's version, we feel the physicality of Tolstoy's details. Rosemary Edmonds, who translated the novel for the Penguin edition in 1954, is more muted. In her English, we see Stiva merely "drawing a deep breath into his powerful lungs," where Pevear and Volokhonsky have "the broad box of his chest"; Stiva's "splayed feet," a detail that marvellously registers the man's heavy displacement, is in Edmonds "his usual spirited step, carrying his vigorous body lightly." The barber's "pink path" is, in Edmonds, a duller "rosy parting."

It is the same throughout the novel. Think of Alexei Karenin, in a fury with Anna, "putting the portfolio under his arm and pressing it so tightly with his elbow that his shoulder rose up"; or the merchant Ryabinin, wearing "high boots wrinkled at the ankles and straight on the calves." Or Levin, in the wonderful scene after his successful wooing of Kitty, waiting with ecstatic impatience in his hotel room for the hour when he can go and announce his intentions to Kitty's parents, while, in the next bedroom of the hotel, "they were saying something about machines and cheating, and coughing morning coughs." Later, when Kitty and Levin are married, he watches her combing her hair, and sees "the narrow parting at the back of her round little head, which kept closing the moment she drew her comb forward." And there is Levin's housekeeper, Agafya Mikhailovna, who, "while carrying a jar of freshly pickled mushrooms to the cellar, slipped, fell, and dislocated her wrist." Or Dolly, who, finding only the children's schoolroom private enough for a talk with the miserable Karenin, sits down with him "at a table covered with oilcoth cut all over by penknives."

These details are surely a large aspect of the "network" that Tolstoy mentions in his letter. First, how true the descriptions are: the "still damp morning newspaper," the people next door coughing in the morning. Further, one notices that his details are almost always propelled by function—by work, in fact. Agafya Mikhailovna is carrying not just any pickled mushrooms but mushrooms that have been "freshly pickled," and perhaps by her; the merchant's boots are wrinkled that way by movement; the narrow part in Kitty's hair opens and closes only when she touches it; and Karenin's shoulder goes up when he squeezes too tightly.

Unlike other modern realists, Tolstoy is not interested in telling us what things look like to him, and he is not interested in telling us what else they resemble. This is why he eschews simile and metaphor at these moments of physical description. When Flaubert, in "A Sentimental Education," writes of the long tail of steam flowing from a train's funnel as the train makes its passage through the countryside, and likens it to "a gigantic ostrich feather whose tip kept blowing away," he is a stylist being a stylist. It is how Flaubert sees the world. In Tolstoy's fiction, as in Chekhov's, reality appears as it might appear not to a writer but to the characters.

When Flaubert describes the train, he is freezing it into a picture, and claiming it as his own. But in "Anna Karenina" reality is what the characters share, and reality is in the present. Flaubert's train, as soon as it becomes style, becomes somewhat superfluous, and not least because metaphor, even the greatest metaphor, tends to insist on the accidental: we are meant to notice that X happens to resemble Y. Yet when reading Tolstoy we feel that though everything is extraordinarily free—Tolstoy does as he pleases, even inhabiting the mind of Levin's dog, Laska, on several occasions—everything is also curiously inevitable. This is partly because reality is not the novelist's toy but his characters' necessary food. Proust, in an enigmatic paragraph on Tolstoy, writes that each feature of his novels, though "supposedly observed" (that is, "accidental"), is actually "the garment, the proof, the example of a law the nov-



"It was the only domain name they had left."

elist has identified, a rational or irrational law. . . . Each gesture, each word, each action being only the signifying of a law, we feel ourselves to be moving inside a multitude of laws." Proust may well be gesturing, in part, toward this sense of inevitability in Tolstoy, of physical detail as the product of the laws of dynamism: in the morning, the newspaper will still be damp and people will cough morning coughs, and oilcoth is always already scratched. The writer who uses metaphor is describing the world hypothetically, as it might be; Tolstoy is describing the world as it is.

Tolstoy began writing "Anna Karenina" in 1873, though he told his wife in 1870 that he was planning to write about a married woman disgraced by adultery. As in the case of "Madame Bovary," an actual event occurred that perhaps gave direction to the novel. In January, 1872, Anna Stepanovna Pirogov, the mistress of a neighboring landowner, threw herself under a train after being abandoned by her lover. Tolstoy went to the station to look at the body. There are familial similarities among novels about fallen women which were written in the second half of the nineteenth century. Like Emma Bovary, Anna reads novels. Like Hardy's Tess, Anna is full-bosomed. Indeed, all three women are sensuous to the point of irresponsibility. Men cannot help being seduced by them, which of course is not thought to be entirely the fault of men; Levin, after meeting Anna late in the novel, calms Kitty's jealousy by admitting to having yielded to her "cunning influence." Yet "Tess of the d'Urbervilles," "Madame Bovary," and "Anna Karenina," while carrying the germs of male blame, produce their own antibodies, so that their doomed heroines are finally sympathized with rather than judged, written into rather than written off. The great age of the fictional character, the nineteenth century, was really the great age of the female fictional character. These are heroines who have been imprisoned by society and are trying to escape: it is because they are trying to escape a world that perceives them as mere types that they become true characters.

Originally, Tolstoy planned a novel that would condemn Anna outright for her sin. In the early drafts, she is a fat and somewhat vulgar creature, and her cuckolded husband is a saint. Most of the novel's spaciousness, as we now know it, did not exist: Levin scything with the peasants, his marriage to Kitty (their fertile domesticity the wholesome "answer" to the sterile carnality of Anna and Vronsky), and all the rest. There was, instead, a relentless concentration on the adulterous triangle. But, Pevear writes in his introduction, as Tolstoy worked on his book "he gradually enlarged the figure of Anna morally and diminished the figure of the husband; the sinner grew in beauty and spontaneity, while the saint turned more and more hypocritical."

Objections to "Anna Karenina" are commonly made. One is that the great scything scenes—or the chapters in which Levin and others go hunting—are tedious or unnecessary. Turgenev and James both found fault with the novel's form; they have recently been joined by A. N. Wilson, who, in his rather shallow biography of Tolstoy, writes that "the extended Levin passages are not obviously justifiable in aesthetic terms." Now, it is possible to view Tolstoy as a beast of instinct who can outrun the nervous zoologists of form, and he is, in a sense, the great anti-formalist. But he himself insisted that his novel had an invisible architecture, and this new translation allows one to trace it.

Some of the novel's power has to do with the way in which Tolstoy slows down the tempo of realism so that it has the more laxly calendared speed of life as we live it. Of course, the scenes of Levin in the countryside are in themselves beautiful: "The tall grass softly twined around the wheels and the horse's legs, leaving its seeds on the wet spokes and hubs." Equally memorable is the picture of one of the peasants, an old man working alongside Levin, who, upon finding mushrooms in the long grass, bends down each time and puts them in his pocket, muttering to himself, "Another treat for my old woman."

As Levin, amazed by how strenuous the work is, loses all sense of the day, so does the novel. In the current translation, Vronsky falls from his horse, in the famous racing scene, on page 199. We relive the race again, this time from Anna's perspective. Then Kitty goes to a German spa and meets the saintly Varenka;

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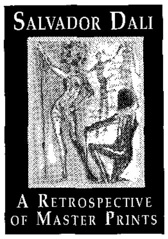
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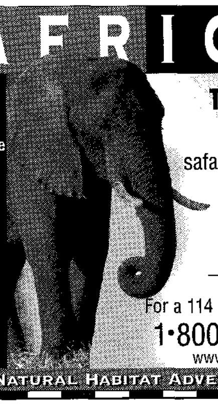

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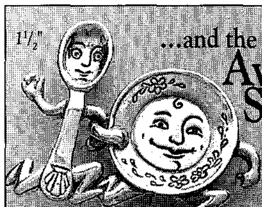

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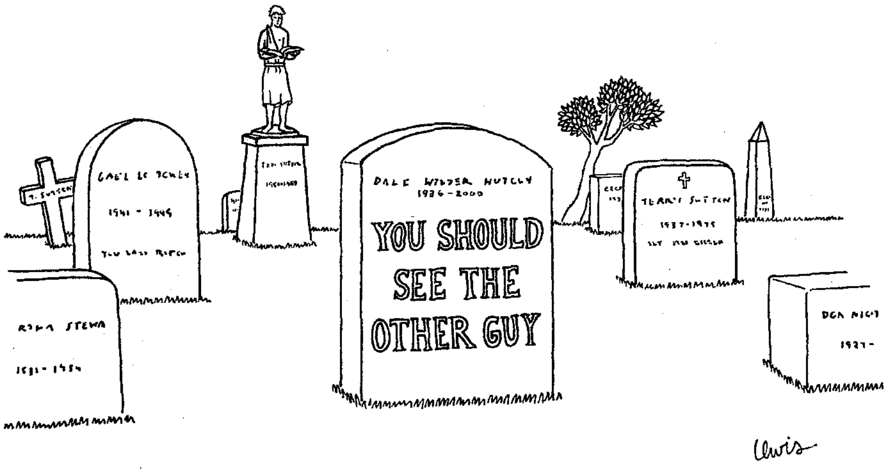

a brother of Levin comes to visit him in the country; Levin scythes with the peasants; Dolly comes with her children to the country; and we see Alexei Karenin in pain and anger as he begins to live with the news that Anna finally gave him after the races—that she loves Vronsky. ("I listen to you and think about him. I love him, I am his mistress, I cannot stand you, I'm afraid of you, I hate you.") But in these hundred pages we do not visit Vronsky once. And when he finally appears on page 302 what does Tolstoy write? "Waking up late the day after the races, Vronsky put on his uniform jacket without shaving or bathing." A hundred pages have elapsed for us, and yet for Vronsky barely an evening. And it has probably taken the reader about an evening to read those hundred pages. The reader may be reading at the same speed at which Vronsky is living. It is difficult to think of a better example of "real time."

A more serious charge concerns Tolstoy's didacticism. Is it not the case that Levin is first bullied by Tolstoy into an identification with the peasants, and then, near the end of the book, into a very Tolstoyan Christianity (three parts ethics to one part theology)? The book ends as Levin commits his life to "faith in God, in the good, as the sole purpose of man," to "that life of the soul which alone makes life worth living and alone is what we value." There is certainly something propagandistic about elements of the scything scenes, and it is always hard not to laugh at Tolstoy when he writes of the peasants that "the long, laborious day had left no other trace in them than merriment."

But in fact Levin's relations with the peasants are pictured with a sense of absurdity. It is clear enough to the reader that Levin uses the peasants for his own moral hygiene. Later in the book, Tolstoy will make one of the finest episodes in the novel from the comedy of Levin's solipsism: his certainty, once he has won Kitty, that everyone else in the world shares his rapture. Returning to his hotel after an evening with his future wife, Levin falls into conversation with Yegor, the lackey on duty. He asks Yegor if, when he got married, he loved his wife. "Of course I loved her," Yegor says. "And Levin saw that Yegor was also in a rapturous state and intended to voice all his innermost feelings." But, comically, we never discover Yegor's innermost feelings, or whether he is really as rapturous as Levin assumes, because a bell rings, and Yegor leaves to answer it. The next morning, Levin decides that even the cabbies outside the hotel "evidently knew everything." Levin's self-involvement is delightful in these pages, but it complicates our earlier reading of his scything with the peasants, as Tolstoy surely intends it to.

Besides, the argument that Levin's busy ratiocination bruises his autonomy as a character presupposes that he has such an autonomy, that Tolstoy the artist is spoiled by Tolstoy the preacher. Even Richard Pevear, in his very intelligent introduction, succumbs a little to the familiar division. But Tolstoy is never really a pure enough artist for his characters to have the kind of purity that can be violated. His approach to them is always paradoxical: they are fixed as essences, and ever-changing as people. Levin has "a desire to be better, which never left him," and that is his essence, though it does not mean that we always know how he will act. It is Karenin's essence that he is cold, despite the fact that, at one moving and unexpected moment, he sobs like a child and warmly forgives both Vronsky and Anna. In time, he returns to his essential coldness and refuses to grant Anna a divorce.

If Tolstoy's characters have a different reality than do those of other novelists, it is because they are both inevitable and unpredictable, universal and private, and because, while they are certainly their own individuals, we are always aware of who their maker is. Tolstoy puts me in mind of the famous Alfred Jewel, a ninth-century English object on which is written, in reference to King Alfred, "Alfred caused me to be made." There is a way in which Tolstoy's characters, despite their autonomy, all bear the stamp "Tolstoy caused me to be made." Think of that very early scene when Levin and Stiva meet. Though we hardly know them, they are already vivaciously established as characters and as essences. Tolstoy tells us that they have been friends for years and have loved each other. And then, in familiar mode, he breaks in and informs us that "in spite of that, as often happens between people who have chosen different ways, each of them, while rationally justifying the other's activity, despised it in his heart." In most writers, this meddling would be dangerous: the characters have just been invented, and here is the author sticking his fat fingers into the web, telling us not only what to think about them but that there is a law by which certain people feel certain things about each other.

Yet the incursion—this is one of many throughout the novel—does not destroy the individuality of Stiva and Levin, because their individuality lies precisely in the different and unpredictable ways in which they embody universal laws. Coleridge said of Lady Macbeth that she is, "like all in Shakespeare, a class individualized." John Bayley tells us in his book on Tolstoy that in the early plans of "War and Peace" Count Rostov appeared as Count Prostoy: *prostoy,* in Russian, means "honest, simple." Is this the artist or the preacher at work? Both, surely: it is not that Tolstoy begins with an idea (in the sense of an abstraction) but that he begins with a truth, a large truth about Rostov. In "Anna Karenina," too, the characters are heirs to universal emotions, as Hamlet is. When Levin feels that the whole world must be aware of his love for Kitty, he feels something individually true and also generally true about the nature of infatuation. One can imagine Stiva feeling the same thing, or even Vronsky. We might even say that Tolstoy's characters have feelings that are peculiar to themselves, but not that peculiar. Paradoxically, they differ from each other while sharing this universality, something suggested by the fact that nearly all the men in "Anna Karenina" are described by Tolstoy as "handsome": Vronsky, Levin, Stiva, but also Levin's old beekeeper, and Dolly's driver, and Veslovsky, the unwelcome visitor. All these men share a kind of law of manliness, and so, in this, resemble each other.

In most novels, we see characters search for themselves, or lose themselves, or build themselves. In Tolstoy, the difficulty is in being anything other than oneself. It is what Tolstoy meant when, late in life, he said, "As I was at five, so I am now." This may be why he has such an interest in those moments when his characters find themselves forced to play roles, or when the natural sounds artificial: to Nikolai Rostov on the field of Austerlitz, the crying of the wounded sounds feigned. It is always moving in "Anna Karenina" when a character struggles with the essence that is surging through him. Once Anna has truly left him, Karenin is so miserable that, uncharacteristically, he thinks of speaking about his sadness to his office manager. But, even caught in this uncharacteristic gully, Karenin has been more characteristic than he can know. For, Tolstoy tells us, "he had already prepared the phrase: 'You have heard of my grief?' " It is so comically stiff that we almost weep with laughter for poor Karenin. Of course, he says nothing.

Reading "Anna Karenina" again, one is struck by the self-absorption of the novel's characters. Vronsky, we are told, "was not in the habit of noticing details." Once he has declared his love to Anna, at the station where the Petersburg train stops during the night, he gets back into his carriage, and "he now seemed still more proud and self-sufficient. He looked at people as if they were things." Alexei Karenin tries for a second to imagine what it is like to be Anna, and abandons the attempt: "To put himself in thought and feeling into another being was a mental act alien to Alexei Alexandrovich." Even Dolly and Kitty, the sympathetic mothers, fail to see that Anna is not merely "pathetic" in her isolation—Kitty's slightly condescending word to Dolly, when, very late in the book, Anna visits them—but opium-sodden and close to suicide. Indeed, one could say that Anna's own solipsism is the result of a society that refuses to see her.

There is a powerful tension between the "sloshy" shared world of the novel—the textures, substances, atmospheres—and the selfish interiority of many of the characters. Accordingly, the most affecting incidents occur when the world breaks in upon these fantasists—when, for example, Vronsky first sees Alexei Karenin, meeting Anna at the Petersburg station, and thinks, "Ah, yes, the husband!" Tolstoy adds, "Only now did Vronsky understand clearly for the first time that the husband was a person connected with her."

Nothing in the book is finer than its last pages, in which Tolstoy shows the creeping disintegration of Vronsky and Anna's relationship. Again and again, Anna struggles with her essence, which is freedom, irrepressibility. Every day, Vronsky goes out into society to claim his freedom. But she cannot do that. Society forbids it. Jealous and resentful, she reflects, "He has all the rights and I have none." Every day, she promises herself that she will not voice her resentment when Vronsky returns, and every day she plays truant with that promise, unable not to be herself. As she falls under the wheels of the train, she has finally, in a way, merged with her essence. For we are told that this woman, with a light step, "fell on her hands under the carriage, and with a light movement, as if preparing to get up again at once, sank to her knees." Light in step when we met her, she is now light unto death. ◆

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BOOKS

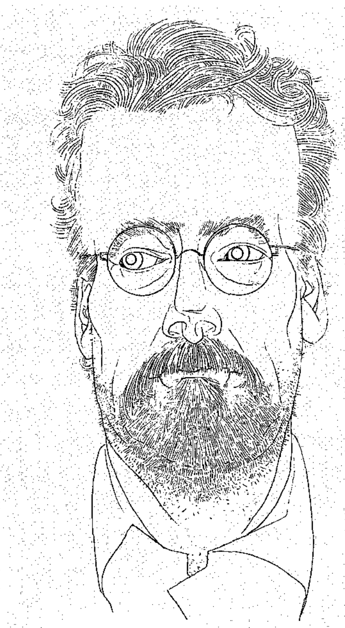
EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Michael Connelly investigates L.A.'s dark heart.

BY JOYCE CAROL OATES

Los Angeles has long been celebrated as the noir dream factory of America. If, per capita, the city and its environs may be less riddled with corruption and violence than Youngstown, Ohio, or Camden, New Jersey, it possesses a redeeming ironic glamour missing from such sublunary locales. This western edge of our continent seems more truly to have "pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams" than the eastern island of which F. Scott Fitzgerald spoke with such elegiac lyricism. Southern California has been the inspiration for a number of noir writers of distinction, from Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald to our contemporaries Joseph Wambaugh, James Ellroy, and Michael Connelly.

Chandler and Macdonald wrote what are essentially romances about heroic private investigators. Wambaugh, Ellroy, and Connelly write more realistic crime novels of that popular subgenre known as the police procedural. In the classic police procedural, the hero is not a private eye or a gifted amateur but a professional detective in the public employ, and the methods of his police work can be assumed to be authentic. In Connelly's novels, we follow the investigations of a canny detective named Hieronymus (Harry) Bosch, of the Hollywood division of the L.A.P.D.; Bosch's precinct is one Connelly came to know well when he worked as a crime reporter for the Los Angeles *Times* in the late eighties and early nineties. What is most appealing about Bosch is that, far from being a fantasy hero, he's a flawed, deeply troubled man: a professional police officer who has the grudging respect of most of his colleagues but has been suspended from duty at least twice, and who seems perpetually on the brink of burnout or implosion. A colleague reflects that Bosch has "haunted eyes" and, in Connelly's latest novel, "A Darkness More Than Night" (Little, Brown; $25.95), he's even a suspect in a gruesomely elaborate murder.



Michael Connelly

DAVID JOHNSON

Aptly named for the Dutch painter whose Christian mysticism revelled in scenes of seriocomic sadism, Bosch is an "avenging angel" with a powerful wish to see sinners punished. He is, in his misanthropic way, an idealist who still believes in the possibility, if not the probability, of justice—through his own exertions. The background Connelly provides for Bosch is brief and instructive: Bosch's mother, a prostitute, was murdered when he was a child, and, during the Vietnam War, Bosch served in a special unit of the U.S. Army where he was trained to enter the labyrinthine tunnel networks dug by the Vietcong. Both experiences have left psychic damage, making Bosch into an obsessive who can't let go of a case—a special breed of cop, who sees his job not as a mere skill or craft but as a vocation. Such cops take on the responsibility of speaking for the dead: "There was a sacred bond cast between victim and cop that formed at the crime scene and could not be severed. It was what ultimately pushed them into the chase and enabled them to overcome all obstacles in their path." But that bond also brings these cops to "that unseen edge beneath which lies the abyss." Nietzsche's famous aphorism in "Beyond Good and Evil" might stand as an epigraph for Michael Connelly's fiction: "Whoever battles with monsters had better see that it does not turn him into a monster. And if you gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will gaze into you."

Connelly began his career with "The Black Echo" (1992), which introduced Harry Bosch, and he quickly followed up with three more novels featuring Bosch: "The Black Ice," "The Concrete Blonde," and "The Last Coyote." He then alternated Bosch novels with densely plotted mystery-thrillers ("The Poet," "Blood Work," "Void Moon") that continue the preoccupations of those novels—in particular, the complicity between criminal and pursuer. Occasionally, Connelly shifts his locale, but his base is Los Angeles in its infinite variety, and his subjects are as timely as L.A. headlines: Hollywood murders, racism, and race riots; drug dealing and violence; corruption within the L.A.P.D.; sadistic sexual crimes, incest and child rape and murder; pedophilia on the Internet.

"A Darkness More Than Night," Connelly's tenth novel, is something of an experiment: Connelly brings together Bosch and the less distinctive hero of "Blood Work" (1998), an F.B.I. profiler named Terry McCaleb, now retired to a tenuous private life on Catalina Island as a husband and father. McCaleb, who is given equal billing with Bosch, is an unlikely player in this noir landscape: he's a decent, fair-minded individual who's a devoted family man and who has recently had a heart transplant, disqualifying him from scenes of physical bravado and action. Whereas Bosch, an isolato, broods compulsively upon the past—his beloved wife, appropriately named Eleanor Wish, has left their marriage under mysterious circumstances—McCaleb has found a new center to his life in his infant daughter, so tenderly noted in the novel that the reader fears for McCaleb's vulnerability.

But Bosch, here as elsewhere, is the character who propels the narrative and gives "A Darkness More Than Night" its air of urgency. Divided into two centers of moral consciousness—Bosch's and McCaleb's—the novel has a tricky double plot. One involves a murder trial in which Bosch is the primary prosecution witness. A Hollywood director is accused of having strangled a young actress and of subsequently having arranged her body to suggest a lurid auto-erotic accident. The other is an L.A.P.D. investigation into the murder of a low-level criminal, whose body has been arranged to suggest a reënactment of a sadistic bondage scene out of Hieronymus Bosch's "Garden of Earthly Delights." By so dividing his novel, Connelly allows Bosch and McCaleb to regard each other critically in ways that sharpen the reader's perception of them both. After Bosch saves McCaleb's life, when McCaleb informs him, "I'm not going to be your friend anymore," the revelation is startling and, for Bosch, deeply upsetting, for he knows that McCaleb's disaffection may be justified. "A Darkness More Than Night" isn't so much about the pursuit of evil as it is about the cultivation of conscience: How can one live, amid evil, a decent life? How, policing violence, can one avoid committing violence? Bosch, having been rejected, takes strength from a sense of kinship with Los Angeles—"the city of the second chance."

In the latter half of the American twentieth century, "crime" seemed to acquire a mythopoetic status. In writing of crime, one is writing of American life in extremis. Crime detection, criminal trials, the enforcement or, more likely, the thwarting of justice—these have become crucial cultural issues, beyond mere entertainment. To anatomize a high-profile crime has become a way of decoding the American soul. This goes to the root of our primitive conviction that death can't ever be "natural," that it must always have an agent, someone specific to blame and to punish—as if, by locating the agent of death, we could forestall death. The most talented of crime writers work, like Michael Connelly, with genre formulas as poets work with "fixed" yet malleable forms like sonnets and sestinas; they put their signatures on the archetype. It's an art of scrupulous realism conjoined with the abiding fantasy of a resolution in which the mysteries of suffering, dying, and death are explained and dispelled. As McCaleb, crossing by boat to Catalina Island at night, assures his worried wife, "I'll be all right. I can see in the dark." ♦

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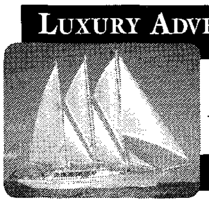

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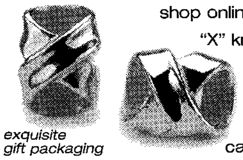

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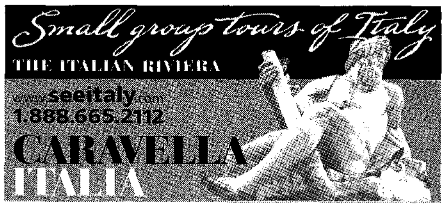

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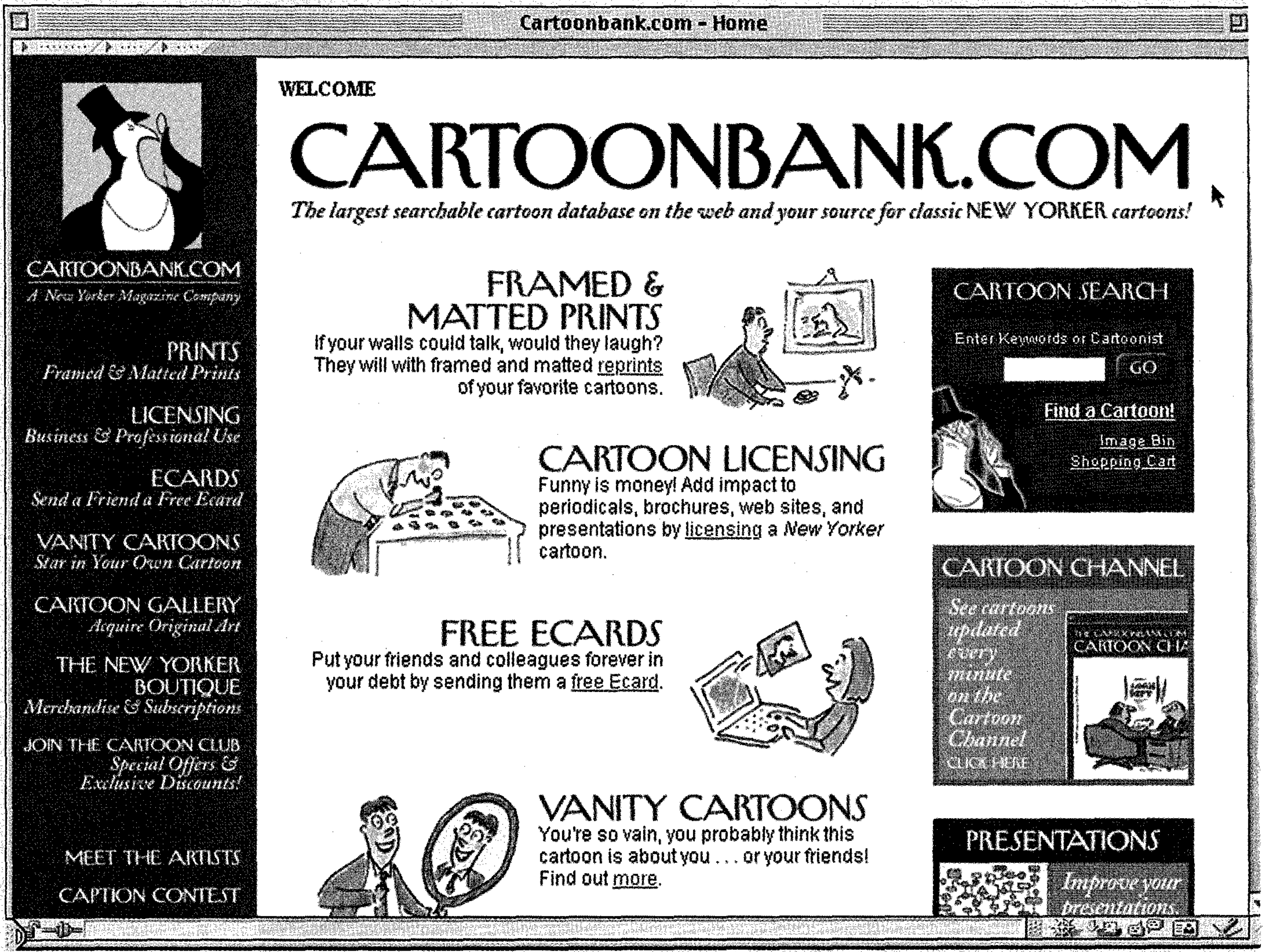

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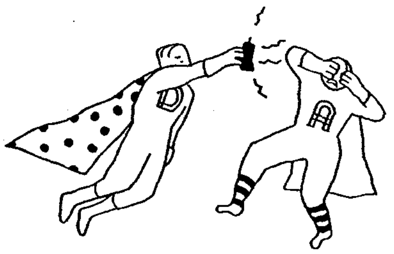
Inspired Sleep, *by Robert Cohen (Scribners; $25).* In this comedy of manners, Bonnie Saks is a faltering Thoreau scholar, an exhausted teaching adjunct, the divorced mother of two, and an insomniac. When she discovers that she's also pregnant, she signs up for an experimental sleep study at Boston General, where a precocious researcher named Ian introduces her to the wonders of Dodabulax. While Bonnie longs for oblivion, Ian craves experience: is he destined to spend the rest of his days sleeping on his sister's couch and charting the behavior of drugged Siamese fighting fish? Smartly observed and stylishly written, Cohen's new novel is crammed with incidental pleasures. Yet underneath its clever examination of our current love affair with pharmaceuticals lie unsettling questions about the myths we choose to live by: it's not the interpretation of dreams but the meaning of our waking hours that is up for grabs here.

A Desert in Bohemia, *by Jill Paton Walsh (St. Martin's; $23.95).* A young woman named Eliska has just pulled herself out of a pit filled with bodies and run to the local castle to hide; its residents have left in such haste that there is bread still rising in the kitchen and an abandoned baby crying for milk. It is 1945, and the Red Army is booting out the good with the bad. The people we glimpse in this novel's opening chapter—Eliska, two Communist soldiers, a count who is an alleged Nazi collaborator, a neighboring aristocrat, and the baby—are revealed at intervals over the following forty years as they cope with exile, repression, impoverishment, and torture. Nearly all of them earn our pained affection—for their frailty and for their kindnesses to each other, across generations and distances and ideologies.



Academic Instincts, *by Marjorie Garber (Princeton; $19.95).* The Harvard professor and frequent cultural critic delivers a trio of essays that diagnose the current state of academe. Rather than offering a social or political perspective, Garber opts for a breezy version of deconstruction, prying apart familiar terms and reconciling apparent opposites. In the first essay, she probes the distinction between professionals and amateurs in intellectual life; the second and third essays deal with the borders between disciplines and the role of jargon, respectively. Garber's good humor and quick wit are apparent throughout, as are her catholic cultural tastes. Unfortunately, her insights about the interpenetration of the academy and society at large rely heavily on examples drawn from the pages of the *Times*, to which she has been a contributor; this dependence has the unintended effect of making her frame of reference even narrower than if it were restricted to the academy.

Bossa Nova, *by Ruy Castro, translated from the Portuguese by Lysa Salsbury (A Cappella; $26).* After four decades, the bossa-nova boom continues to reverberate, in both the retro-kitsch soundtrack of "Austin Powers" and the cool post-rock of groups like Stereolab. This chatty, vivacious account of bossa's development in Rio and São Paulo in the fifties, and its subsequent international acceptance, sometimes suffers from an awkward translation but is never boring as it follows the comings and goings of an Altmanesque cast of night-club pianists, newspaper columnists, students, diplomats, and poets in a milieu as freewheeling as Fifty-second Street at the birth of bebop. At the heart of the story is an infuriating genius named João Gilberto—couch-surfer, ladies' man, and malcontent—whose years of musical seeking finally bring him, in 1958, to a kind of abstract samba, its beat implicit in the Morse-code guitar chords that accompany the cool precision of his vocals.

Success is not forever, and failure isn't fatal.

THE LITTLE BOOK OF COACHING KEN BLANCHARD AND DON SHULA

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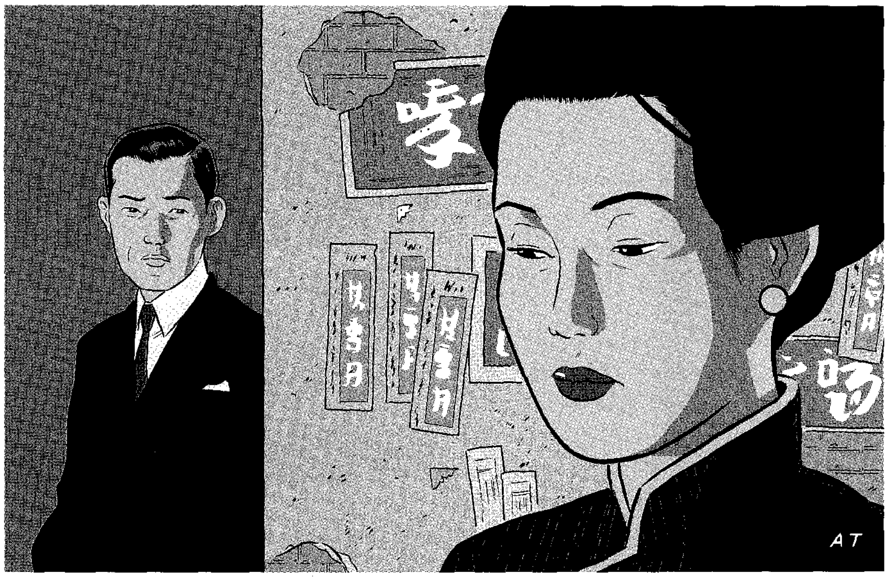
THE CURRENT CINEMA

SOCIETY DICTATES

Behaving in Hong Kong, and rebelling in Berlin.

BY DAVID DENBY

The woman is dressed in a floral-patterned silk gown with a regal collar rising to the top of her neck, and her hair is worn high, gathered in a magnificent swirl. The man, sheathed in suit and tie, is lithe and handsome, with Brylcreemed black hair and a gravelly voice. In Wong Kar Wai's accomplished but peculiar "In the Mood for Love," Maggie Cheung and Tony Leung, two of the leading stars of Hong Kong cinema, move like exquisite mannequins, imprisoned in their clothes and perfect manners. The movie is set in the early sixties, among a colony of Shanghai-born men and women living in Hong Kong. Mrs. Chan (Maggie Cheung) boards with a noisy, convivial family while her husband is away on business in Japan. Mr. Chow (Tony Leung), whose wife is also away a lot, lives in the apartment next door. They meet, they talk, and before long they realize that their spouses are off having an affair with each other. But there isn't much they want to do about it, and they remain very proper in their behavior. Far too many eyes are watching, and they're not eager to commit adultery themselves. Honor as well as propriety is at stake, and love is a secret to be held in the privacy of loneliness.



Anticipation: "In the Mood for Love," with Tony Leung and Maggie Cheung.

"In the Mood for Love" is all about sensual anticipation. Not much happens, but Nat King Cole croons on the soundtrack, and the camera caresses the rain on the streets and the texture of a stone wall in the semidarkness. At times, Wong Kar Wai seems entranced by such things as Maggie Cheung's undulating rear as she lugs a heavy can of noodles up a staircase or by Tony Leung's humorous, melancholy face, which always seems to express more than his character is prepared to say. Wong is a master of mood and of rhythm, though this movie, with its silences and sexual reticence, is very different in feeling from his earlier work. In the international hit "Chungking Express" (1995), Wong made a new kind of art out of spontaneity and fleetingness. The movie was set largely in a sweaty, crowded Hong Kong mall where wistful young men and women kept missing each other by seconds. The connections that Wong made between character and setting, dialogue and music, were more intuitive than logical, but the movie hung together. The lightweight imagery of "Chungking Express"—staggered, slowed, frozen—was brushed by wings of beauty. Shot with a handheld camera, the movie was a lyrical tease. In the gorgeously lurid "Fallen Angels," which followed, sense and meaning dissolved altogether in a whirl of red-streaked neon and spectacular shoot-outs. "Fallen Angels" was violent and funny, and Wong's next movie, the morose "Happy Together," about two Hong Kong homosexuals self-exiled to Argentina, was sparked by the lovers' quarrels.

Nothing explodes in the new movie, but Wong Kar Wai is still teasing us with syntax. Several scenes, for instance, appear to start over and reach slightly different endings. The alternative versions suggest the indeterminacy of a situation in which personal desire struggles against a rigid social code. To commit adultery or not? For a long time, we think the characters are chasing each other into situations that have only one way out. An emotional breakthrough looms. So skillfully does the director bring us to a state of anticipation that when he refuses to deliver he seems to have invented a new form of perversion. For the audience, the experience of watching the movie is rather like being ravished in the night by a dream; if nothing happened, then why are the bedclothes disordered? "In the Mood for Love" leaves one unsatisfied yet moved and impressed. Wong Kar Wai is an artist, even if he chooses to frustrate us.

Bibiana Beglau, the star of "The Legend of Rita," is such a tremendous performer that one roots for her disastrously misguided character—Rita Vogt, a West German terrorist of the nineteen-seventies. A political thriller set in the later years of the Cold War, "The Legend of Rita" is a work of fiction. But Volker Schlöndorff, the director, and Wolfgang Kohlhaase, who worked with him on the screenplay, have drawn on the comic-sordid history of the Baader-Meinhoff gang, who traded blows with the West German police throughout the seventies. When we first see Rita, she bounces into a bank

ADRIAN TOMINE

ike Bonnie Parker. “Hi, guys, we're the robbers,” she announces to the baffled customers and clerks. “We're nationalizing the economy.” Rita and her friends don't wear masks, and they make a casual escape in the course of which Rita stops to give part of the swag to an astonished street bum. She has style and panache; she embodies the youthful romance of urban-guerrilla revolution, in which preposterously naïve ideas—Rita thinks she's going to bring the “armed struggle in the Third World” to the capitalist strongholds—result in the death of innocent people. Her notions are inane and dangerous, and yet she herself is not inane; she's willing to die for what she believes. Bibiana Beglau, who is twenty-eight and has appeared in the theatre and in small movie roles, has a challenging stare, and a ferocious will that seems to originate somewhere in her lower back and go straight up her spine into her neck and head, which is held proud and high, like a ballerina's. Beglau throws her sinewy body into whatever she does, whether it's work, sex, or stickups. She's a great camera subject: urgent yet pliant and yielding; not beautiful, exactly, but radiant and sympathetic.

Rita and her friends are “idealists”—perhaps the last that Communism produced. Guns tucked into their jeans, they think they're working for a more equitable world. The comedy of the situation is that terrorists in liberal democracies are so isolated and ineffectual that they might be flailing around in pancake batter. There's not much for them to do but blow up a building or two, get hunted by the police, and provoke the authorities into acting brutally. Farce haunts the edges of “The Legend of Rita,” but Schlöndorff pulls away from it and tells his story straight, which is good, since Rita Vogt, as embodied by Bibiana Beglau, is worth caring about. Schlöndorff, who has been directing since 1966, when he made “The Young Törless,” and whose work includes “The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum” and “The Tin Drum,” is not what I would call a witty or debonair filmmaker. He tends toward dourness and dark irony. “The Legend of Rita,” however, is a candid and emotionally charged piece of work. Bibiana Beglau's warmth has brought Volker Schlöndorff to life.

As Rita tells us, in a voice-over narration, she joined the movement because she had a crush on Andi (Harald Schrott), a snarling revolutionary with a drooping black mustache. During an attempt to spring Andi from a West Berlin prison, an innocent man is killed, and Rita, who was driving the getaway car, has to flee, first to Beirut and Paris and then to East Germany. There she receives protection from the Stasi, the secret police, who admire her as a kind of romantic loser—a reminder of the youthful capacity for action and belief that most of them no longer have. A prescient intelligence officer named Hull (Martin Wuttke) watches over her, intervening in her life whenever she's close to trouble. Hull, whose grim humor creates the atmosphere of a spy story, makes up a new identity—a new “legend”—for Rita, turning her into a worker in a textile factory, where she's thrown in with a group of depressed women who are dying to get to the West. Without much emphasis, Schlöndorff records the utter dreariness of the workers' paradise—the ugly, uncomfortable apartments, the sodden imitation of Western pop, the inability of the people at a party to dance with energy. Rita hooks up first with a rebellious young woman who's drinking herself to death and later with a handsome physics student. A normal life beckons, but she's always on the run, and as she hides the movement fades away, leaving nothing behind but some Jimi Hendrix records and a few headlines in yellowed copies of *Der Spiegel.* We keep waiting for Rita to wake up to the hopelessness of Communism, but she stumbles right into 1989 still believing in “revolution,” and it might be a violation of her essence if she did wake up. She's not sentimentalized, but she's not dismissed, either. She remains a deluded but vibrant woman, re-created with love and, at the end, something like a pang of grief. ♦

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THE BACK PAGE BY BRUCE McCALL

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PRESIDENTIAL PARDON APPLICATION

(DO NOT SUBMIT THIS FORM UNTIL YOU HAVE PLACED ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS IN ESCROW.)

PART I

1. The silly misunderstanding that leads me to request a Presidential pardon was the result of (CHECK ONE):
   - __A conspiratorial frame-up by virility-challenged mugwumps desperate to block upcoming federal school-uniform legislation.
   - __Bungled Swiss paperwork.
   - __Legal hairsplitting on definitions of "racketeering," "mail fraud," or __________.
2. My net worth as of this date is $________________.
3. I frequently (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY):
   - __Offer interest-free, unsecured personal loans of up to $________ to friends.
   - __Offer stock options/hot tips worth as much as $________ to friends.
   - __Arrange salaried no-show jobs and/or lucrative Board of Directors seats worth $________ for friends.
   - __Lend ski lodges, beachside villas, private jets, or other (if other, please specify) _________ to friends.

SIGNED ________________________ DATE ____________ NOTARIZED ________________ SEAL NO. _____

PART II

Which of the statements below are true?

- __"Anybody who could dream up something like Whitewater and get off scot-free is somebody I could do business with."
- __"Tattletale chicks are my pet peeve."
- __"Ford's pardon of Nixon wasn't the same at all." (Explain)

If any of the above statements are not true, add fifty thousand dollars to your escrow account.

TO THE APPLICANT: DEPENDING ON YOUR CREDIT RATING AND BANK STATEMENTS, YOU MAY QUALIFY FOR THE SPECIAL **SPEE-D-PARDON** OPTION. TO ENROLL IN **SPEE-D-PARDON**, SIMPLY PLACE ANOTHER HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS IN ESCROW AND COMPLETE PART III.

PART III

1. I would describe myself as (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY):
   - __Somebody who can keep his/her big mouth shut.
   - __Somebody who likes to party hearty.
   - __Somebody who never forgets a favor.
   - __Somebody who is well connected in Hollywood.
2. If I were ever to be accosted by the media regarding the grounds for my pardon, I would say:
   - __"I don't remember the specifics."
   - __"Well, 'quid pro quo' is a funny word."
   - __"I guess he was thanking me for having fixed a parking ticket for him once."

If your answer is other than one of the options above, explain:____________.

PART IV—TO BE COMPLETED ONLY BY PRESIDENTIAL RELATIVES

If pardoned, I promise to change my name, move to another state, stay at least 1,000 miles away from the President and his immediate family, make no financial requests, return all photographs, letters, and other documents requested, and allow the President first editing rights on manuscripts, interviews, or any other public utterance(s) wherein his name is mentioned.

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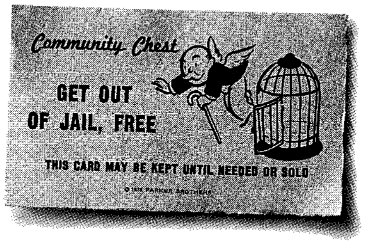
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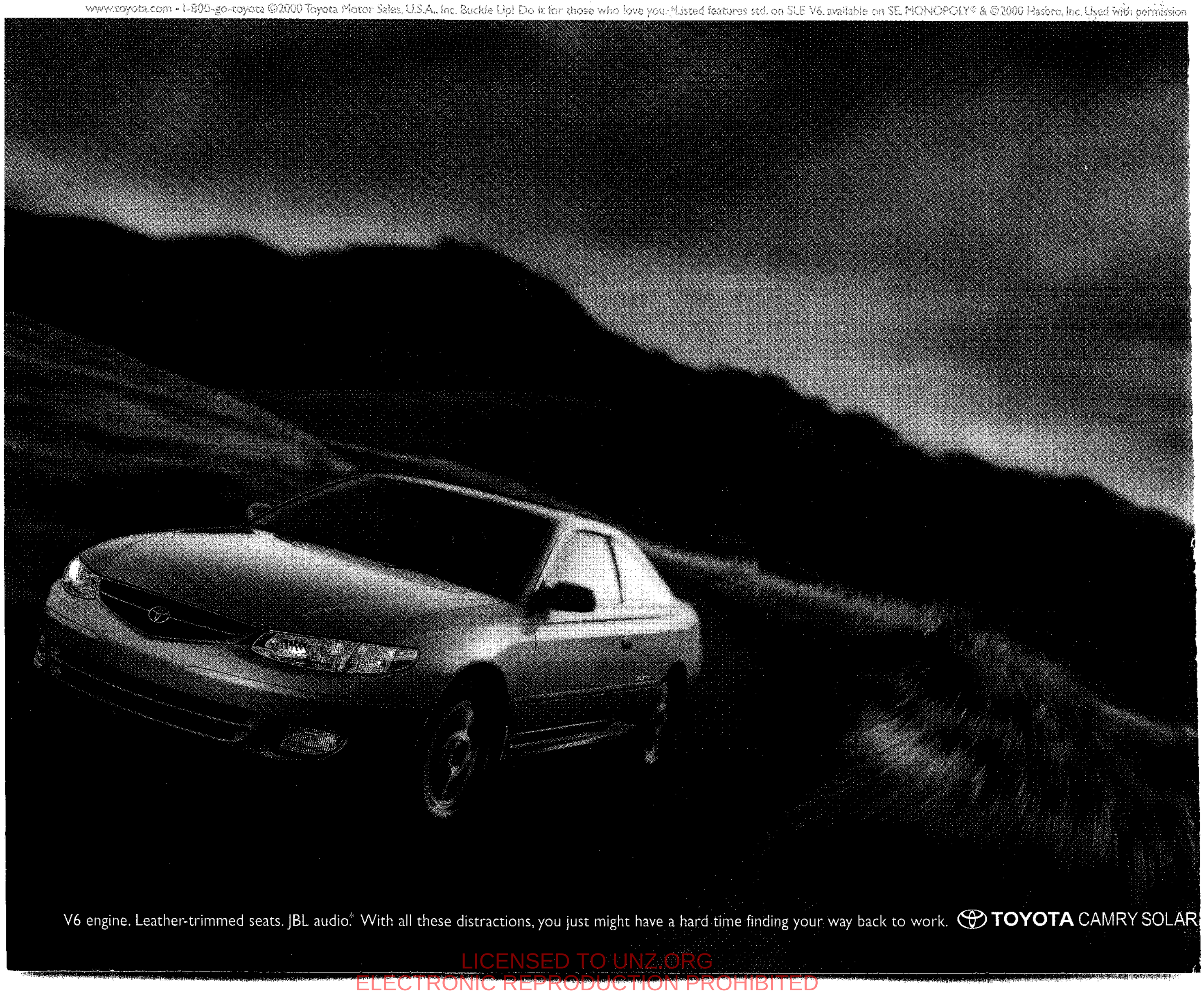
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